UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
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TO LITERATURE AND ART.

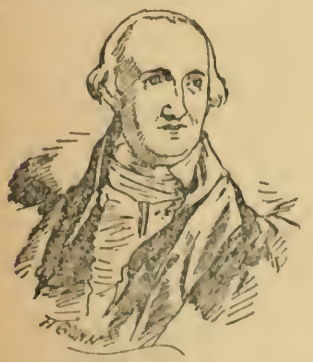
Manuscript Revolutionary Journals of Elias Boudinot Found.

STARTLING STORY ABOUT GEN. LEE.

His Contemptuous Opinion of Gen. Washington, Who Had Showered Honors Upon Him—An Attempt by Lee to Violate the Rules of War—Lee's Conduct While a Prisoner.

In the library of Mr. John E. Baker, of Philadelphia, to be sold in a few weeks in that city, there is a remarkable manuscript volume, which is without doubt the most interesting historical record in relation to the Revolution that has ever been unearthed, and the only wonder is that its contents have not been given to the world years ago.

To Mr. William S. Baker, to whom this manuscript was loaned, is due the credit of discovering the historical value of this book.



ELIAS BOUDINOT, LL. D.

Mr. Elias Boudinot was Commissary-General of Prisoners during the years 1777 and 1778. His book is entitled "A Magazine for Miscellaneous Pieces and Publications Collected and Preserved by Elias Boudinot." Some of the striking incidents mentioned in it are Boudinot's interview with Lee at New York in January, 1777, which reveals the peculiarities of Lee's mental organization. From the time of Lee's appointment as Major-General great change was to be void without any charge of failure on my part.

I arrived at headquarters about 6 o'clock P. M. and, going in to the General, began to tell him of my success, when he interrupted me with much eagerness and asked me if I had exchanged Gen. Lee. I informed him of what had been done. He replied, "Sit down at this table and write a letter informing the enemy of my confirmation of the exchange, and send one of my horse guards immediately to the enemy's lines with it."

I assured him that next day would be time enough, but he insisted on it being immediately done, and I sent accordingly, fixing the next day but one for Gen. Lee's coming out to us.

When the day arrived, the greatest preparations were made for his reception. All the principal officers of the army were drawn up in two lines, in advance of the camp about two miles towards the enemy. Then the troops, with the inferior officers, formed a line quite to headquarters, all the music of the army attended. The General, with a great number of principal officers and their suites, rode about four miles on the road towards Philadelphia and waited until Gen. Lee appeared. Gen. Washington dismounted and received Gen. Lee as if he had been his brother. He passed through the lines of officers and the army, who all paid him the highest military honors, to headquarters, where Mrs. Washington was, and here he was entertained with an elegant dinner, and the music playing the whole time. A room was assigned him back of Mrs. Washington's sitting-room and all his baggage was stored in it.

Gen. Washington gave him the command of the right wing of the army, but before he took charge of it he requested leave to go to Congress at Yorktown, which was readily granted.

Before he went I had an interview with him. He expressed himself under the greatest obligations to me, and assured me that he never should forget my kindness, but wished exceedingly to know if I had made his communication to Congress and what was their opinion of it. I assured him that I had not and that if he was wise he would say nothing upon the subject. He said he was going to Congress for that purpose, and he never would rest till it was done, as he was now more than ever convinced that nothing else could save us; that he found the army in a worse situation than he expected, and that Gen. Washington was not fit to command a sergeant's guard.

My jealousy of him was greatly confirmed, and I began to interrogate him about his reception in Philadelphia, and immediately brought about the question whether he had seen Gen. Howe. He told me that he had been closeted with him the evening but one before he left the city. I urged him to tell me the substance of the conversation that passed between them. He told me that Gen. Howe began to talk upon the claim of independence by the Americans, that he thought it one of the most absurd and hopeless expectations that could enter into the minds of sensible men.

"'And, as for you, Lee,' said he, 'what in the devil could get into you to be so crazy?' Why you ought to know better."

Lee answered that he thought it a very wise measure and that if it had not been done the Americans would have been with-

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THE TREASON OF CHARLES LEE.

"If I had ever assumed the character of a military genius, and the officer of experience; if, under these false colors, I had solicited the command I was honored with; or if, after my appointment, I had driven on, under the sole guidance of my own judgment, and self-will; and misfortunes, the result of obstinacy and misconduct, not of necessity, had followed, I should have thought myself a proper subject for the lash, not only of his, but of the pen of every other writer, and a fit object of public resentment. . . . An effrontery, which few men do, and, for the honor of human nature, none ought to possess."

WASHINGTON TO PRESIDENT REED, *July 29th*, 1779.

. . . . . "Servetur ad imum,
Qualis ab incepto processerit, et sibi constet."

HORACE, *Ad Pisones:* 126.

MAJ GEN CHARLES LEE

Charles Lee

"Mr. Lee's Plan—March 29, 1777."

THE

TREASON OF CHARLES LEE

MAJOR GENERAL

SECOND IN COMMAND IN THE AMERICAN ARMY
OF THE REVOLUTION.

BY

GEORGE H. MOORE

LIBRARIAN OF THE NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

[READ BEFORE THE SOCIETY, ON TUESDAY EVENING, JUNE 22, 1858.]

"The evil that men do lives after them."

16707
6.5.21

NEW-YORK:
CHARLES SCRIBNER, 124 GRAND STREET.
M.DCCC.LX.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1858, by
GEORGE HENRY MOORE,
in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the Southern District of New-York.

JOHN F. TROW,
Printer, Stereotyper, and Electrotyper,
377 Broadway.

TO THE

HON. LUTHER BRADISH, LL.D.

PRESIDENT OF THE NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

WITH A GRATEFUL

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THAT PERSONAL FRIENDSHIP

WHICH HAS BEEN

THE ENCOURAGEMENT AND REWARD OF MY

LONG SERVICE IN THE SOCIETY

OVER WHICH

HE PRESIDES WITH EQUAL DIGNITY AND ABILITY

THIS ESSAY

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY

GEORGE HENRY MOORE.

January, 1860.

investigation. When it was first brought to me, with other documents from the same sources in England, I was not allowed to examine it any further than was necessary to satisfy myself of its genuineness by those tests with which all scholars are familiar—a restriction to which I submitted upon the undoubted assurance that the same conditions had been and would be imposed upon every one to whom it had been or would be shown. As this restriction was intended to assure the pecuniary value of the manuscripts, which were offered for sale, I have no reason to doubt that it was invariably imposed, so that when I purchased them, a few days afterwards, I found myself in sole possession of papers of the most startling character—a key to some of the strangest secrets of the Revolution.

The portrait opposite the title-page is reduced from the folio print published in London during the war, and was engraved to accompany the illustrated edition of Irving's Life of Washington. I am indebted to the liberal courtesy of Mr. George P. Putnam for permission to use the plate.

The other engraving was taken from a caricature drawing, by Barham Rushbrooke, Esq., of West

Stowe, near Bury, in England. He was commonly called *Counsellor Rushbrooke*, from his having been bred to the law. He was considered as a man of great taste in painting, and all the liberal arts. His grandson married one of the daughters of Sir Charles Davers, who was one of General Lee's most intimate friends.

General Lee's likeness was taken on his return from Poland, in his uniform as aid-de-camp to Stanislaus, King of Poland. It appears to have been carefully preserved by the Davers family, and was engraved in 1813, to accompany a work published by Dr. Thomas Girdlestone, to prove that Lee was the author of Junius. That gentleman, to whose work I am indebted for these facts, says of it: "Though designed as a caricature, *it was allowed, by all who knew General Lee, to be the only successful delineation, either of his countenance or person.*" It is the only one of the so-called portraits, which I have met with, bearing any evidence of authenticity, or answering to the personal descriptions given by his cotemporary friends and biographers. Sir Henry Bunbury says: "In person he was tall and extremely thin; his face ugly, with an aquiline nose of enormous proportion." Dr. Girdlestone

says: "General Lee was a remarkably thin man, and is said to have had the smallest hand and slenderest fingers that could be seen." Mr. Langworthy says: "The General, in his person, was of a genteel make, and rather above the middle size; his remarkable aquiline nose rendered his face somewhat disagreeable." Another description is that "he was of more than ordinary stature, lean but well proportioned. His features were disagreeable."

The Life of General Lee has been written by Mr. Edward Langworthy, in the memoirs published in 1792 and 1797 in England, and thrice reprinted in America; by Sir Henry Bunbury, whose father was a first cousin of Lee, in 1838; and by Mr. Sparks in 1846, for his series of American Biographies. To these are to be added numerous anonymous sketches, scattered through the journals and periodicals of the last century, and notices more or less brief, in various biographical works. I have sought for and examined all that are accessible to me. To all I wish to render due acknowledgment, and especially to Mr. Sparks, whose steps must be followed with grateful reverence by every student of American History, and with

no little caution by any who may presume even in the light of new discoveries, to differ with him on any important point.

Mr. Bancroft, to whom I made known the earliest results of my studies, recognizing at once the important bearing which they have on the subject of his own grand work, permitted me to make several extracts from his collection of MSS., illustrating and confirming the positions which I had taken; and encouraged me in my labors by his liberal approbation.

I have also to acknowledge my obligations to Professor George W. Greene, Mr. John Jay, Mr. John Carter Brown, of Providence, to whose liberality and the kindness of my friend the Hon. John Russell Bartlett, I am indebted for access to the treasures in his library, one of the richest in the world in American History; Mr. N. F. Cabell, of Warminster, Nelson County, Va.; Mr. William Hunter, of the State Department at Washington; Mr. Townsend Ward, and Mr. Ferdinand J. Dreer, of Philadelphia.

But my chiefest acknowledgment is really due and most heartily rendered to Peter Force, my father's, and my own venerated friend, whose great

work, the American Archives, is the monument of his ability, judgment, industry, and fidelity. It is the *thesaurus maximus*, the chief treasure-house of American History. Its completeness, and richness of illustration, for the period it embraces, is such as to enhance the regret, which is shared by all scholars, that its progress has been so long and so seriously interrupted.

THE TREASON OF CHARLES LEE.

Mr. President:

The paper which I have the honor to submit to the Society this evening, is sketched from materials reserved for a more elaborate examination of the principal topic, than the limits of a single paper would permit. I have availed myself of the invitation, to make known to the public the existence of documents hitherto unknown in our history, and of great importance to that portion of it, which records the struggles through which the Republic came into existence. In the hour to which I am limited, I shall ask your attention to some sketches of the life and character of Charles Lee, in order to a proper appreciation of his place in the history of the American Revolution.

Charles Lee was the youngest son of Colonel John Lee, of Dernhall, in Cheshire, England; his mother was Isabella, the second daughter of Sir Henry Bunbury, Bart., of Stanney, in the same county. The Lees of Dernhall were an ancient

family, of which the Earls of Lichfield were a younger branch; but the chief line which removed from Lee to Dernhall in the time of Charles I., became extinct in the male line at the decease of the subject of this paper. John Lee, some time a Captain of Dragoons, afterwards Lieutenant-Colonel of General Barrell's Regiment, 4th Foot Guards, was made Colonel of the 44th, (or East Essex Regiment,) a Regiment on the Irish Establishment, March 11, 1743. He continued in the service until his death, which occurred on the 5th August, 1750. His widow (baptized at Chester Cathedral, October 2, 1702) was still living in December, 1764. Of their four children, the daughter, Sidney Lee, and the youngest son, Charles, were at that time the only survivors; Thomas and Henry having died, and without leaving children. Miss Sidney Lee survived all her brothers, and died unmarried, 16th January, 1788. Madame D'Arblay, who met her at Bath, speaks of her, as "a very agreeable woman." She was an accomplished and liberal woman, and treated the Americans, who were captured and imprisoned by the British in England, with great humanity. The principal part of the estate which General Lee possessed at the time of his death, he bequeathed to her, and she remitted four thousand five hundred pounds sterling to America, in order to discharge her brother's debts, lest his legatees in this country should be deprived of what he had bequeathed to them.

Charles Lee was born in 1731, and is said to have received a commission in the army at eleven years of age. The army was not at that time, with respect to the appointment and promotion of subalterns, under the wise regulations which afterwards prevailed: not only privates, but officers were on the Army List, whom their own Colonels knew only to exist because their names were on the roll; and instances are said to have been known, in which one-third of the subalterns of a regiment were in the nursery!

The Duchess of Marlborough, in one of her letters to the Earl of Stair, December 3, 1737, has preserved a curious instance of this abuse. She says that "Lord Hervey's wife's father, Mr. Lepel, made her a cornet in his regiment as soon as she was born, which is no more wrong to the design of an army than if she had been a son: and she was paid many years after she was a maid of honour. . . . . My Lord Sunderland got her a pension of the late King, [George I.,] it being too ridiculous to continue her any longer an officer in the army." When such things were tolerated within the purlieus of the Court, it would be strange if the Irish establishment were not full of similar examples. Ireland was always the theatre of the most flagrant abuses. Besides, in those days, and indeed many years later, it was one of the usual courses of military education, to remove a boy immediately from the preparatory school into the regiment, and to

give him no other training than what the regiment, with perhaps the occasional tuition of a friendly superior, might afford—the main business being to learn the practical art and exercise of war.

There is no improbability, therefore, that his father, soon after he received his own commission as Colonel, may have placed young Lee in the regiment, and before he had completed his twelfth year.

He is said to have considered himself as born in the army; and it is natural to suppose that his education was designed with reference to that profession to which his own temper, not less than the inclination of his parents, must have directed him. Little is known, however, of his early training. The free grammar school of Bury St. Edmund's, and an academy in Switzerland, share its honors with the regiment.

It is stated, that to respectable attainments in the Greek and Latin classics, he afterwards added a thorough familiarity with the French, and a competent skill in the Spanish, German, and Italian languages. The latter he may have acquired in the course of those long wanderings in search of knowledge or pleasure, to which his restless disposition urged him—for nature had made him an enthusiast, and whatever was the object of his pursuit, he followed it with an extreme ardor. Possessing talents above the common order, he turned his advantages (such as they were) to good account; although the

practical lesson of his life seems clearly to indicate little strictness and method, in that domestic discipline which would have been far more valuable to him than any of his acquisitions.

The study of his profession enlisted all his energy. As he approached and entered upon its active duties, he applied himself with characteristic zeal, and his writings, not less than his career, leave us in no doubt that he acquired a very general, if not thorough knowledge of what was then known in England as the science of war.

On the 2d May, 1751, a few months after his father's death, he received a Lieutenant's commission in the same regiment, which was continued on the Irish establishment after it was ordered to America in 1754.

Hitherto his opportunities of becoming familiar with the school of the soldier, must have been very insufficient. The English service, (especially on garrison duty in Ireland,) in times of peace, afforded him no practical lessons; for mounting guard once or twice a week, or the preparation for the review of a single regiment, could hardly be esteemed as such: and it was long after the time of which I am speaking, that the Duke of Wellington—who acquired his own military education on the Continent—is reported to have said that if ten thousand men were placed in Hyde Park, there was not an officer in the service who could get them out!

But a better field of practice was now opening

before Lee. His active military career began, as it ended, in America; and his first experience in arms presents singular points of resemblance as well as contrast with his last service in the field. In fact, nearly all the real service he ever saw was in America. It began in the valley of the Monongahela, and it closed on the Heights of Monmouth. Washington saw the beginning and the end, and the same eyes that had anxiously watched as he followed and protected the flight of the young subaltern in 1755, flashed withering scorn and indignation upon the traitor-general who meditated his disgrace in 1778.

When Braddock was sent out to repel the encroachments of France, and restore the English power upon the American Continent, the regiment in which Lee was still a Lieutenant, was one of the "two European Regiments," which were the stamina of the expedition. The events which followed are too familiar to need any recital here, terminating as they did in "a scene of carnage which has been truly described as unexampled in the annals of modern warfare." It was, in truth, "the most extraordinary victory ever obtained, and the farthest flight ever made," and, as Mr. Irving has justly remarked, "struck a fatal blow to the deference for British prowess, which once amounted almost to bigotry, throughout the provinces." Franklin says in his autobiography, "This whole transaction gave us Americans the first suspicion, that our exalted

ideas of the prowess of British regular troops had not been well founded."

In that ignominious and terrible defeat, Lee had the good fortune to escape without notice. I am not aware that the fact of his being present has been stated by any of his biographers, or the historians who have portrayed those tragic scenes with such graphic power. But I am able to say, as the result of a very careful and laborious examination of all the materials at hand for a decision, that he was on duty with his regiment at that time. Few of the officers escaped unhurt, and the number of those who came out with untarnished reputations was still less. Lee himself afterwards found occasion to allude to the fact that "none of the regulars chose to remember their early defeats and disgraces, particularly those upon the Ohio, in all which the provincials never led the flight, but were the last to leave the field;" and he does not seem to have broken through that prudent reserve in his own behalf. The silence of his biographers, especially of his kinsman, Sir Henry Bunbury, is very remarkable, but would be much more so, if the most diligent search had been rewarded with the discovery of any thing honorable or even creditable to their hero.

The shattered remains of Braddock's broken army under Colonel Dunbar, reached Philadelphia early in September. On the first of October, they marched for New York, and on the 8th and 9th,

they passed the metropolis in thirty-three transport sloops from Amboy, on their way to winter quarters at Albany and Schenectady.

Lieutenant Lee was present at Fort Johnson, in some of the conferences between Sir William Johnson and the Indians of the Six Nations with their allies and dependants, which took place during the winter of 1755–'56. Upon these occasions and subsequently, when stationed in that part of the country, he had much intercourse with the Mohawks, and was captivated by their manners, their "hospitable, civil, and friendly" deportment, the personal beauty of many of them, their graceful carriage, and by what he calls their good breeding, or "constant desire to do every thing that will please you, and strict carefulness not to say or do any thing that may offend you."

His admiration was reciprocated, and he was received with great favor, by adoption, into the tribe of the Bear. With curious felicity, they bestowed on him the name of Ounewaterika, which, in the Indian dialect, is said to signify "boiling water," or "the spirit that never sleeps."

He soon after purchased a company in his regiment, for which he paid nine hundred pounds. His commission as a captain in the 44th Regiment was dated 11th June, 1756.

Great preparations had been made for the campaign of that year, but the time wore quietly away. The only considerable movement of the 44th Regi-

ment was in a tardy and abortive attempt to reinforce the garrison at Oswego, which surrendered to the French, 14th August, 1756. The loss of this important post excited a general alarm throughout the colonies; and the speaker of the New York Assembly, writing to the agent of that province, on the 13th of October, added to a gloomy picture of the state of affairs: "As for our forces on the northern frontier, both regulars and provincials, I expect to hear of no action by them, unless the enemy force them to it."

In the disposition of the forces for the ensuing winter (1756–'57), the 44th and 48th regiments were to garrison the forts between Albany and Crown Point.

In 1757, these regiments formed a part of the forces designed for the conquest of Louisbourg, the Dunkirk of America, which had, in the previous war, been captured from the French, chiefly through the zeal and enterprise of New England; even then arousing at home those jealous fears which had long predicted the independence of the colonies. Its restitution was, in reality, the purchase of a general peace in Europe by the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, which restored this conquest to France; and it was now the object of the ministry to recover it. A vast armament was assembled at Halifax, under the command of Earl Loudoun, arousing the most sanguine expectations of success; but nothing was done to realize them. The campaign ended like the pre-

vious one, and the commander-in-chief was censured by his whole army. Among other employments of the idle time at Halifax, the troops had been engaged in making a garden to furnish vegetables as a precaution against the scurvy, and as a provision for the sick and wounded, who might be sent thither for their recovery, in case the intended attack against Louisbourg should take place. This provident foresight was a topic of merciless ridicule, and gave point to the satire of Lee which first brought him to notice in cotemporary history.

Smith, the historian of New York, recording the events of the winter of 1757–'58, says: "While we were in suspense respecting the plan expected for the operations of the ensuing year, the military officers indulged great heats concerning the inactivity of the last campaign. Lord Charles Hay led a party at Halifax in severe reflections on the Earl of Loudoun. Their animosities spread to New York; and among the discontented, no man indulged in greater liberties than Mr. Lee, then a subaltern, who did not restrain himself in the open coffee-house, from calling it the Cabbage Planting Expedition; drawing into question not only the Earl's military skill, but his courage and integrity."

It is worth noticing here, that the earliest published letter written by Lee, of which I have any knowledge, fully justifies the statements (with which it was furnished to the publisher by his relative, Sir Charles Bunbury), that he "began very

early to abuse his superiors, and was not very nice in the terms he made use of;" and that he had "a turn for satire and a levelling disposition." He retained this character to the end of his career; and no officer, under whose immediate command he ever served, escaped his censure.

The second notice of Lee, by a younger cotemporary, presents his actions in no very favorable light, but can hardly be omitted.

In the latter part of June, 1758, his regiment proceeded to the north, in the army under General Abercrombie. As the troops were marched in detachments past the "Flats," above Albany, the ancient rural home of the Schuylers, each detachment was quartered for a night on the common, or in the offices. One of the first of these was commanded by Lee, afterwards of "frantic celebrity." He had neglected to bring the customary warrants for impressing horses and oxen, and procuring a supply of various necessaries, to be paid for by the agents of government on showing the usual documents; nevertheless he seized every thing he wanted, where he could most readily find it; as if he were in a conquered country; and not content with this violence, poured forth a volley of execrations on all who presumed to question his right of appropriating for his troops, every thing that could be serviceable to them; even Madame Schuyler, accustomed to universal respect, and to be considered as the friend and benefactress of the army,

was not spared; and the aids which she never failed to bestow on those whom she saw about to expose their lives for the general defence, were rudely demanded or violently seized. Lee marched on after having done all the mischief in his power, followed the next day by an officer and gentleman of a very different character, the lamented Lord Howe.

At the assault of Ticonderoga, Lee is said to have distinguished himself, and received a severe wound from a musket shot, which passed through his body and broke two of his ribs. He was conveyed, with other wounded officers, to Albany, and this brings the sequel of his acquaintance with the Schuylers. "Madame Schuyler had fitted up a temporary hospital on hearing the news of the defeat. Among the patients was Lee, the same insolent and rapacious Lee, who had insulted this general benefactress, and deprived her of one of her greatest pleasures, that of giving a share of every thing she had, to advance the service. She treated him with compassion, without adverting by the least hint, to the past. . . . Even Lee felt and acknowledged the resistless force of such generous humanity. He swore, in his vehement manner, that he was sure there would be a place reserved for Madame in heaven, though no other woman should be there; and that he should wish for nothing better than to share her final destiny."

He remained at Albany until he recovered,

when he joined his regiment in winter quarters at Newtown, Long Island; where, during the winter, he narrowly escaped assassination at the hands of a "little cowardly surgeon," as he called him, whom he had severely whipped for an alleged libel. I suppose his assailant to have been the surgeon of his own regiment.

During the next campaign, he accompanied the successful expedition against the French garrison at Niagara, which cut off the communication between Canada and Louisiana, and gave the English entire control of the upper lakes. He was subsequently despatched with a small party (another officer and fourteen men) to follow the route of the French who had escaped; the first party of English troops that ever crossed Lake Erie. He went to Presq' Isle, and by way of Venango, down the western branch of the Ohio to Fort Duquesne. From this place, at that time in possession of the English, he made a march of seven hundred miles, to join General Amherst at Crown Point; another march to Oswego, and afterwards went to Philadelphia, where he remained through the winter, on the recruiting service.

In the campaign of 1760, which completed the British conquest of Canada, his regiment was with the forces led by Amherst from Lake Ontario down the St. Lawrence to Montreal; and soon after the reduction of Montreal, he returned to England. His friends there had encouraged him to return,

with strong expectations of promotion, and the opportunity of service on the continent.

His uncle, Sir William Bunbury, writing from London, November 28th, 1759, said: "But sure you are not to stay on that continent for ever; we wish you to come again amongst your friends, and probably some change might be procured, as well as advance on this side of the water, if you desired it. Lord Granby commands in Germany at present, and is likely to be at the head of the army on this side of the water too, if Ligonier drops; and it is supposed he cannot last a great while longer. The taking of Munster, which we had advice of the other day, will be of great importance to our allied army, and secure them good winter quarters. A great many matches are talked of here in town, so that if you do not come soon, all our fine young ladies will be disposed of." His promotion soon followed: but it does not appear that Lee was permitted to enjoy either the winter quarters provided at Munster, or the felicity suggested in the society of any of "the fine young ladies."

Of his early services in America, it is not too much to say, that his success was such as to justify his choice of a profession, and satisfy the expectations of his friends. But even at this period his hot and imperious temper was provoking serious difficulties, which a very little prudence would have avoided. His love of power, and his thirst of ambition, ill suited with the subordinate offices of a

subaltern. He was born not only to command, but like Cæsar, not to brook contradiction from an equal, much less to receive commands from a superior. His restless disposition made even the service to him, a field for opposition: in every commanding officer he saw an usurper or a tyrant, and he hated no enemies more cordially than order and obedience. These reflections are forced upon us even in the scanty details of his early history, and give us one clue to that knowledge of his character which is necessary to enable us to account for the actions of his life.

On the 10th of August, 1761, he was promoted to a majority in the 103d regiment of foot, or the Volunteer Hunters. This regiment was disbanded in 1763, and Lee continued a major on half-pay until the 25th of May, 1772, when he was made a Lieutenant-Colonel, still on half-pay.

This was the highest rank he ever attained in the British service. And when, in 1769, he received the appointment of Major-General, from the King of Poland, he did not consider it incompatible with his higher rank, to retain his majority and receive the half-pay annexed to it, doubtless because it was "too considerable a sum to throw wantonly away."

In 1762, when the English auxiliary force was sent to assist Portugal in repelling the invasion of the Spaniards, Lee accompanied Brigadier-General Burgoyne, with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel in

the service of the King of Portugal. The combined armies were put under the command of the Count de la Lippe Buckbourg, an active and intelligent German officer, who had commanded the artillery of the British army in Westphalia, a man undoubtedly among the first of his time in military fame. He was placed at the head of about six thousand British troops, and a Portuguese army, the greater part of which was little better than nominal, to defend an extensive frontier against the whole force of Spain, and a large body of the veteran troops of France. Burgoyne was intrusted with the defence of the most important pass upon the Tagus. The result of the campaign was to check the progress of the Spaniards, who retired within their own borders. Lee acquitted himself honorably, and in one affair especially, gained high praise. The command of a detachment destined to surprise the Spanish camp near the old Moorish Castle of Villa Velha on the south bank of the Tagus, was confided to him, and the service was performed in the most brilliant manner. He crossed the Tagus in the darkness of night; gained the rear of the Spaniards without discovery, and entered their quarters without being perceived, till his own bayonets told the secret. They were routed at once, with terrible slaughter; and having destroyed their magazines, and spiked or taken their guns, Lee and his men returned to the other side of the Tagus, loaded with booty and surrounded by helpless prisoners.

This spirited achievement took place on the 6th of October, 1762. Lord Loudoun described it to the ministry as "a very gallant action," and the Count de la Lippe said, in a letter to the Earl of Egremont —applauding the conduct of "the gallant Lieutenant Colonel Lee" and the British troops—"so brilliant a stroke speaks for itself." Thus recommended to the special favor of government by the Court of Lisbon and the Count de la Lippe, Lee returned to England.

But here his promotion in the British army halted. Notwithstanding the "brilliant prospects" which his intimacy with "men of high rank and influence in London," and the apparent "friendship of one of the cabinet ministers," seemed to promise, he still continued, and for many years afterwards, a Major on half-pay. His biographers have attributed his want of success to the part which he took in the discussion of some of the ministerial plans relating to American affairs, and date the beginning of his services to America from this period. I doubt the correctness of this view of the case, for I have found no sufficient evidence to sustain it; and "it can scarcely be denied that he had a higher opinion of his claims than his services, and his just pretensions on this ground alone would naturally warrant."

His unpopularity may be said to have grown out of the severity of his strictures upon persons in authority, in the exercise of his illiberal freedom of speech, rather than his liberal sentiments. The

enmities which he drew upon himself from certain powerful quarters (to which he afterwards referred in his letter to the King of Poland) were the fruit of that furious temper, which might have been expected to do great injury to any cause in which he engaged, and to none more than that in which he was most interested—his own advancement. Always forward, arrogant, and mutinous, strong in his own opinion, with the government he served he took all the liberties of an insolent servant who believes himself to be necessary; compelling them, even if they could not deny his talent, to judge him ill qualified by such a character to govern those under him, or to obey those above him. Eager, fickle, and violent in spirit, his instability and lack of judgment, together with his wanton and unhappy wit, made him quite as formidable to his friends as to his enemies.

Failing to obtain that recognition of his claims which he sought and expected, and seeing "no chance of being provided for at home," he determined to go into the Polish service, to which he had such recommendations that he thought he could not fail. The idea that he was actuated by any other motives than the desire to provide for himself and to see service, is simply absurd. He embarked in this cause as a soldier of fortune, and "without any definite purpose as to the side he should take. Action, the glory of arms, high rank in his profession, were the images that floated in his imagination

and directed his course." This was at the time when the dissensions in Poland had arisen to such a height, as to make it probable that a struggle for her ancient independence was to be undertaken by that unhappy nation.

In Poland, he received an appointment as aid-de-camp to the king; who, Lee states, "had it not in his power to provide for me in the army." This appointment was one of honor, rather than employment; and Lee, weary of inactivity, readily accepted an invitation to accompany the king's ambassador to Constantinople. This expedition came near proving fatal to him, for he narrowly escaped starvation and freezing on the summits of the mountains of Bulgaria. He reached Constantinople, however, where he remained about four months, escaping there also from the ruins of his dwelling, which was destroyed by an earthquake.

In December, 1766, he was again in England, renewing his attempts to obtain promotion in the British army. He presented to the king, with his own hands, an urgent letter of recommendation from Poniatowski, Stanislaus Augustus, the last King of Poland; reminding him, at the same time, of the promise he had made in his favor to Lord Thanet three years before. All was in vain; his attendance at court produced nothing but disappointment, and he abandoned his pursuit of promotion in the English service, with a bitter resentment against king and court, which rankled ever afterwards in

his breast. In 1768–'9, he hurried again to Poland, designing to engage in the service of the Russians against the Turks. The King of Poland in the summer of 1769, made him a Major-General. He is said to have "served through one campaign." He was with the Russian army a few days on the Turkish frontier, and in this so-called service, as in that of England, his opinions of the skill and genius of the generals in command were exceedingly scornful and contemptuous. He left the army and crossed the Carpathian Mountains, on his route to try the waters of Buda. In Hungary, he was attacked with a fever which threatened his life. He recovered, however, and went to Vienna, where he passed the winter of 1769–'70. He suffered much from bad health during these years of wandering, especially with rheumatism and gout, which were his very frequent companions. He passed the summer of 1770, in Italy, where he became involved in a duel with a foreign officer, whom he killed, though he was wounded himself, losing two of his fingers in the affair. His first biographer remarks that "his warmth of temper drew him into many rencounters of this kind: in all which he acquitted himself with singular courage, sprightliness of imagination, and great presence of mind."

It is difficult to follow him in his rovings over Europe at this period, which have been compared in speed and irregularity to a meteor; but there is one point, which can hardly be passed over without

remark—the claim made for him as the author of the Letters of Junius. His vanity led him to acknowledge them as his own in 1773, but the evidence on the subject is conclusive that he could not have been the author of those letters.

In the summer of 1773, he quitted England forever. Disappointed in his hopes of advancement by the administration, which he hated, and lampooned publicly and privately, his sympathies had fallen naturally into that opposition, which, though "feeble and fluctuating in numbers," "uttered the language of the British constitution, and the sentiment of the British people, when it spoke for freedom."

He had already fixed his hopes on America, and in his schemes and visions of the future, had identified his own prospects to some extent with her chances of emerging from ministerial oppression. Some private interests, too, called him here. But America, though the chief, was not the only country, which presented to his troubled spirit the view of a climate and soil more friendly to the spirit of liberty than the land of his nativity. In his own language, while she was "stretching forth her capacious arms, Switzerland, and some of the Italian States had room also" to admit the "generous few" among whom he ranked himself. His enthusiasm fluctuated with his anger and disappointment; and candor will seek in vain to find in the fretful waves and noisy torrents of his passion, that strong and

constant under-current of patriotic principle, which flows steadily on to the end of its course. Certainly his patriotism was not free from the taint of disappointed ambition; its loudest tones followed his unsuccessful attempts to obtain promotion, and were accompanied with the most virulent abuse of the king and court.

He arrived at New York, in the ship London, Captain James Chambers, after a passage of eight weeks, on Friday night, 8th October, 1773. He remained in New York, suffering from an attack of gout for a part of the time, until the 29th of November, when he is noticed in the following terms, in Rivington's Gazette, as having "set out for the Southern Colonies—a native of Great Britain, and Major-General in the service of his Polish Majesty—a sincere friend to liberty in general, and an able advocate for the freedom and rights of the Colonies in particular."

He soon ran through the colonies of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, attracting in all quarters marked attention, and assiduously cultivating the acquaintance of all the prominent men among the Whigs. He then returned to visit the Eastern Colonies, in the summer of 1774.

To his old friend and fellow-soldier Gates, afterwards "the hero of Saratoga," he wrote from "Williamsburg, May ye 6th" [1774], on his way northward—"My plan is at present for Boston, and in the autumn to fall down the Ohio to the Mississippi,

if we are not prevented by a war, which I think probable enough. What think you of our blessed ministry? Do they not improve in absurdity and wickedness? Seriously, Gates, I think it incumbent on every man of liberality, or even common honesty, to contribute his mite to the cause of mankind and of liberty, which is now attacked in her last and only asylum. She is drove from the other Hemisphere; for in England she has been for some time only a name; for my own part, I am determined (at least I think I am) not to be slack in whatever mode my service is required."

The enthusiasm which he found pervading the Colonies, would have fired the zeal of a much less excitable man than Lee. It was the inspiration of the best passages of his career. He saw the earnest determination of the Colonists to sacrifice all for freedom, and recognized that justice in their cause, which made their firmness, virtue.

In 1774, he wrote the Strictures on a Friendly Address to all Reasonable Americans, in reply to Dr. Myles Cooper, one of the best of his writings, which was reprinted many times, and widely circulated. At this time, his pen and tongue were constantly active in the cause of the Colonies, which he supported with great ardor. His services in this way, were undoubtedly important—probably much more so than any others of his life.

He returned to Philadelphia and was present at the first session of the Continental Congress; in

constant and familiar intercourse with the delegates from all sections of the country. He again visited Virginia and Maryland, and, in the latter colony, was present at their convention to deliberate on public affairs.

In a letter to his friend, Sir Charles Davers, written from Philadelphia, September 28th, 1774, he says: "I have now lately run through the colonies from Virginia to Boston, and can assure you, by all that is solemn and sacred, that there is not a man on the whole continent (placemen and some high churchmen excepted), who is not determined to sacrifice his property, his life, his wife, family, children, in the cause of Boston, which he justly considers as his own. Inclosed, I send you the resolutions of one of their counties, which the delegates of all America are sworn to abide by. They are in earnest, and will abide by them so strictly that I am persuaded that the parent country must shake from the foundation. . . . They certainly are to be justified by every law, human and divine. You will ask, where will they find generals? But I ask, What generals have their tyrants? In fact, the match in this respect, will be pretty equal."

It required no prophet to see, in the immediate future of America, the necessity of providing for military defence, the organization of a Continental Army, and the appointment of general officers to exercise the command under the authority of the Continental Congress. In this crisis, Lee "assumed

the character of a military genius, and the officer of experience," and "under these false colors solicited the command." He had been in the British army thirty-two years—eight years an Ensign, five years a Lieutenant, five years a Captain, eleven years a Major, and three years a Lieutenant-Colonel; the last twelve years on half-pay. In all this, he had never obtained the command of a regiment!

In America, he seems to have invaded mens' good opinions with singular audacity and success, and obtained for himself from the start a degree of popularity and confidence almost without parallel. Certainly, at that time, every thing which he claimed for himself was fully and freely accorded; and there is no reason to doubt that he expected he should soon become the first in military rank on this continent. In 1775, he purchased an estate in Berkeley county, Virginia, near that of his friend Gates; thus apparently uniting with the people of America, and identifying himself with their cause and feelings. This step removed what he considered the most serious obstacle in his way to the chief command, as he himself had written to Edmund Burke, from Annapolis, December 16th, 1774: "Nor do I think the Americans would or ought to confide in a man, let his qualifications be ever so great, who has no property among them." The preliminaries to the purchase were not completed in the latter part of May, 1775, when, to a brief note to a friend concerning them, he added, "it would be foolish

to write to-day—the Congress will settle all by Tuesday, then a letter may be worth receiving." The second Continental Congress had met at Philadelphia on the 10th of May, 1775, and Lee was present anxiously awaiting their action.

Upon the organization of the Continental Army, Lee was appointed second Major-General; Washington being made Commander-in-chief, and General Ward, who was then in command of the New England Army near Boston, first Major-General.

A cotemporary writer in Maryland says: "The exaltation of [Washington] to the supreme command is considered as a severe stroke to the ambition of General Lee, who, relying on a supposed opinion of his superior abilities and experience, expected to have been unanimously chosen to this elevated station. I am persuaded, that General Washington would rejoice in an opportunity of returning into the private walks of life; but it is too evident that General Lee is governed by a vindictive spirit, the result of disappointment in military advancement, while in the service of Great Britain. Perhaps this additional mortification may moderate his zeal in the cause he has recently espoused." The unanimity with which the nomination of Washington was confirmed, checked every expression of discontent, although Lee was not the only candidate for the honor. John Adams records some very curious manifestations of feeling on this subject, but none so grateful to the historian as the character-

istic dignity and modesty of Washington. A high estimate was placed upon the experience and abilities of Lee. Elbridge Gerry, writing from Massachusetts to the representatives of that colony on the 4th of June, 1775, says: "We want a regular general to assist us in disciplining the army . . . and, although the pride of our people would prevent their submitting to be led by any general not an American, yet I cannot but think that General Lee might be so established as to render great service by his presence and councils with our officers." In these opinions, he was seconded by General James Warren. Lee succeeded in concealing his disappointment, and even acquiesced, though with a very bad grace, in being placed below General Ward, whom he describes as "a fat old gentleman, who had been a popular church-warden, but had no acquaintance whatever with military affairs." He had been nominated as second officer, and strenuously urged by many, particularly Mr. Mifflin, who said that "General Lee would serve cheerfully under Washington; but, considering his rank, character, and experience, could not be expected to serve under any other; that Lee must be *aut secundus aut nullus*." But this undoubtedly authorized statement of his claims and expectations was unavailing. John Adams, "though he had as high an opinion of General Lee's learning, general information, and especially of his science and experience in war," frankly said that he "could not advise General

Ward to humiliate himself and his country so far as to serve under him."

Adams also bears witness to "the earnest desire of General Washington to have the assistance of Lee and Gates, the extreme attachment of many of our best friends in the southern colonies to them, the reputation they would give our arms in Europe, and especially with the ministerial generals and army in Boston, as well as the real American merit of them both;" all which overcame his anxiety for the natural prejudices and virtuous attachment of his countrymen to their own officers and secured his vote. Samuel Adams spoke of Washington, Lee, and Major Mifflin, as "a triumvirate which will please the circle of our friends."

Washington himself, who placed the most modest estimate upon his own abilities and military experience, and could declare with the utmost sincerity that he did not think himself equal to the command he was honored with—an honor he neither sought after nor desired—magnanimously acknowledged Lee's claim to the first place in military knowledge and experience.

An acknowledgment far too generous! It was not his due, nor can it fail hereafter to be regarded as a remarkable phenomenon in our revolutionary history, that so unprincipled an adventurer succeeded in occupying even a secondary position; strange that he retained it so long as he did, and strangest of all that, to this day, his mem-

ory has filled no insignificant place in the grateful thoughts of America.

But Washington, though by no means blind to Lee's defects in character and temper, could hardly resist so fierce a blaze of popularity, or what was afterwards so justly characterized by Hamilton as "a certain pre-conceived and preposterous notion of his being a very great man," which always "operated in his favor."

At this time, too, there was a very natural feeling of doubt as to the ability of any provincial officers to assume the leadership and direction of the military forces which were to be arrayed against the tried and veteran soldiers of Europe. Confidence was not great enough in the schools and training of the Indian and French wars, when compared with the fields of battle and the lines of contravallation in which the great commanders of Europe had learned their art, and although those wars had developed elements of power which were destined to exert a lasting influence upon the military history of America and the world, still America could not yet shake off that feeling of dependence which demanded encouragement and sympathy from European skill and training.

Braddock's defeat, in 1755, on the fatal field of the Monongahela, had illustrated the comparative value of the disciplined regular of Europe and the rifleman of America; and even while Congress was deliberating, on the very day on which Lee was

appointed, Bunker Hill was repeating the lesson, learned by heart long before the close of the war—a lesson, which neither Howe nor Clinton ever forgot in their subsequent career in America. Nor was it long before America learned that among her own true and faithful children, born on the soil, she had many better and braver soldiers than the man in whom she thus "placed so large a share of the most ill-judged confidence."

In "soliciting the command he was honored with" in the American service, he seems to have used sufficient caution and reserve to enable him to make terms with his employers. Upon accepting the commission tendered him by Congress, he resigned that which he had still held in the British service, in a letter to Lord Barrington, dated June 22d, 1775, renouncing his half-pay, at the same time repudiating the opinion, that an officer on half-pay is to be considered in the service, as erroneous and absurd.

His biographers have given him the credit which he claimed for himself in this connection, for making great personal and pecuniary sacrifices—thus proving the integrity of his principles, and the sincerity of his professions. His fortune was ample; his income was nearly £1000 a year, besides having large grants of land in the colonies. He afterwards found occasion frequently to enumerate these sacrifices, and said, "such were the fortune and income which I staked on the die of American liberty, and I

played a losing game; for I might lose all, and had no prospect or wish to better it."

This was not the light in which those who knew him best regarded the matter. Ralph Izard to Arthur Lee, August 21, 1775, says, after expressing his satisfaction with General Lee's letter to Burgoyne: "Lee has acquired considerable property; and I have been assured, by people who know well, that he would never run the risk of losing it, by entering into the service of America. The part he has acted, after taking such a considerable time to think of it, is a proof that he does not think there is much danger of that." He adds: "I wish to know whether he is appointed second or third in command, or whether the Congress have taken any measures to prevent his ever becoming, by the death of superior officers, commander-in-chief. Have these officers taken an oath to obey the orders of Congress? This I take for granted, as it seems absolutely necessary."

The journals of Congress are conclusive, and no ingenuity can soften his direct stipulations for indemnification, into an acceptance of voluntary pledges from Congress. How strong the contrast, at every point of his American career, with that of his great chief—the leader of our armies! But to the record.

General Lee was appointed on the 17th June, 1775. On the following Monday, the 19th, a committee, consisting of Mr. Henry, Mr. Lynch, and Mr.

John Adams, waited upon him, by order of Congress, to inform him of his appointment, and request his answer whether he would accept the command.

"The Committee returned and reported, that they had waited on General Lee, and informed him of his appointment, and that he gave for answer: 'That he had the highest sense of the honor conferred upon him by the Congress; that no effort in his power shall be wanting to serve the American cause; but before he entered upon the service, he desired a conference with a committee, to consist of one delegate from each of the associated Colonies, to whom he desired to explain some particulars respecting his private fortune.'

"Whereupon, Mr. Sullivan, Mr. Samuel Adams, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Dyer, Mr. Philip Livingston, Mr. William Livingston, Mr. Ross, Mr. Rodney, Mr. Johnston, Mr. Henry, Mr. Caswell, and Mr. Lynch, were appointed as a Committee to confer with General Lee.

"The Committee returned, and reported, that they had conferred with General Lee, who had communicated to them an estimate of the estate he risked by this service.

"Whereupon, *Resolved*, That these Colonies will indemnify General Lee for any loss of property which he might sustain by entering into their service; and that the same be done by this or any future Congress, as soon as such loss is ascertained."

If any doubt should rest upon the matter with this evidence, it must be forever dispelled by that which follows, showing how the transaction was completed.

Immediately after the repulse of the British before Charleston, two days after the date of Lee's despatch announcing it to Congress, the President of South Carolina wrote a letter, from which the following extracts are copied:

J. RUTLEDGE TO SAM. ADAMS AND STEPH. HOPKINS.

"CHARLESTON, S. C., July 4, 1776.

. . . "I trouble you with a few lines respecting the General [Lee]. He thinks his situation rather awkward.

"You know the Congress engaged to indemnify him against any loss he might sustain, by entering into our service, and that immediately upon such loss being ascertained. He has purchased an estate in Virginia for about 5 or £6000, of that colony; and, having borrowed the money to pay for it, of Mr. Morris, the estate is under mortgage to him. The General drew bills for £3000 sterling, on his agent in England; they are returned protested, and he has no doubt that his property in England is confiscated. So he does not know that he has any estate at all; nor has he any security, but the mere word of honor of a body, which is not permanent, but frequently changeable, and composed even already, of many other members than those

who made this promise. He wishes to be sure of something, and asked my opinion as a friend, whether there would be any impropriety in his applying to Congress on this head. He is desirous for the present, that the Congress should discharge the incumbrance on this estate, so that it may be clear, and advance a sum towards improving it.

"I think the request exceedingly reasonable, and told him my opinion that the Congress really should do this, without his application, and that I would write to some gentlemen of the Congress on this head. I wish, therefore, that you, as well as others, gentlemen of my particular acquaintance (to whom I now write) would urge this matter to Congress.

"I really think the continent so much obliged to this gentleman, that they should gratify him in every reasonable requisition. This colony, I am sure, is particularly indebted to him, for he has been indefatigable, ever since his arrival here, and you know he is an enthusiast in our cause.

"I conceive no injury can possibly arise to the continent, by complying with what he wishes for. Should his English property remain untouched, he can readily refund. Should it be taken, the payment of this money and more, is a mere matter of justice. But, on the other hand, should there be delay and indifference on the part of Congress, it may produce disgust, or some other ill-consequence. This is my own fear. I have no authority for it,

from any thing which has fallen from the General. I therefore must repeat my request, and make it a very earnest one, that you will obtain some speedy resolution respecting this matter, such as I have above hinted, which may afford him satisfaction, and do him honor. I am, gentlemen, &c."

President Rutledge also wrote to Duane, Livingston, and Jay of New York, urging their co-operation; and Mr. Jay in a letter to Edward Rutledge recognizes the propriety, policy, and justice of the measure; adding, "I am, for my own part, clear for it, and wish with all my heart that it may take place."

On the 7th of October, 1776, General Lee informed Congress of his arrival in Philadelphia, in obedience to a resolution directing him, in case the British troops left the Southern Colonies, to repair to Philadelphia, and there wait the orders of Congress. Being ordered to attend in Congress, he gave an account of the state of affairs in the Southern Department. On the same day the Committee appointed to take into consideration the application from the President of South Carolina, in behalf of General Lee, reported:

"That this Congress having a just opinion of the abilities of General Lee, applied to him to accept a command in their service, which he readily agreed to, provided the Congress would indemnify him against any loss which he might sustain in conse-

quence thereof, he having at that time a considerable sum of money due to him by persons in the kingdom of Great Britain, which he was resolved to draw from thence as soon as possible. That the Congress unanimously concurred in his proposal; that he accordingly entered into their service; that he has since drawn bills upon his agent in England, which bills have been returned protested. That General Lee having purchased an estate in Virginia, the purchase-money for which has been long due, is likely to sustain, by means of the protested bills, many injuries, unless this house prevent the same by an advance of 30,000 dollars; whereupon

"*Resolved*, That the sum of thirty thousand dollars be advanced to General Lee, upon his giving bond to the treasurer to account for the same, and taking such steps in conjunction with Robert Morris, Esq., on behalf of the Congress, as will secure the most effectual transfer of his estate in England, to reimburse the Congress for the advance now made him."

Immediately after his appointment, General Lee accompanied Washington to Cambridge, receiving everywhere in his journey through the country, marks of respect and high appreciation, hardly less than those bestowed upon Washington.

[I omit here, the sketch of his services in Rhode Island, New York, and the South, simply remarking as I pass, that his good fortune in gaining credit for military skill did not desert him.]

General Ward's resignation, after the evacuation of Boston, made Lee second in command, standing next in rank to Washington. By the reputation of his imputed successes in the Southern Department, he was marvellously elated, growing more and more disposed to regard himself as one whose advice ought to be followed and submitted to in all things. Prosperity and glory brought out his vices in full strength; and he seems to have determined to exalt himself at all hazards.

There was something in the enthusiasm of his admirers in Congress to account for the freedom with which he criticized every movement—censuring Congress themselves for their blunders and want of spirit; and he unquestionably looked forward to an influence in their councils which should principally direct the future operations of the war.

Upon his arrival from the south at Philadelphia, he had been directed by resolution of Congress, October 7th, to repair to the camp at Harlem, with leave if he thought proper, to visit the posts in New Jersey.

At about the same time John Jay wrote from Fishkill to Edward Rutledge: "If General Lee should be at Philadelphia, pray hasten his departure—he is much wanted at New York;" whence Colonel Malcom had written to John McKesson a month before, "General Lee is hourly expected, as if from heaven, with a legion of flaming swordsmen."

He arrived at New York, October 14th, whence he wrote this characteristic letter to Gates:

GENERAL LEE TO GENERAL GATES.

"Fort Constitution, October y^e^ 14th.

"My dr. Gates:

"I write this scroll in a hurry—Colonel Wood will describe the position of our Army, which in my own breast I do not approve—*inter nos* the Congress seem to stumble every step—I do not mean one or two of the Cattle, but the whole Stable—I have been very free in delivering my opinion to 'em—in my opinion General Washington is much to blame in not menacing 'em with resignation unless they refrain from unhinging the army by their absurd interference—Keep us Tionderoga; much depends upon it—We ought to have an army on the Delaware—I have roar'd it in the ears of Congress, but *carent auribus*.

"Adieu, my Dr. Friend; if we do meet again, why we shall smile. Yours, C. Lee."

Here again the prevailing opinion of his military ability accorded to him great credit, which he was never backward in continuing to claim, for the movements by which Howe was prevented from cutting off the communications of the American Army with the country, and thus bringing them between the British army and fleet. But the truth is that more than a month before the arrival of

Lee, it was agreed in a council of general officers, held at General McDougall's quarters, 12th September, 1776, that the principal part of the army should march into the country, so as to keep in advance of the British columns, and that eight thousand men only should remain for the defence of the Heights—Mount Washington and its dependencies. It was of this council that General McDougall afterwards said (7th January, 1782,) in respect to the retreat from New York, that "none were opposed to it, but a *fool*, a *knave*, and an *obstinate*, *honest man*." Even when Howe's intentions became more obvious by the accumulation of his numbers at Throg's Neck, the council of the 16th October, at which Lee was present, decided, with but one dissenting voice, to carry out the plan of the 12th of September, the only change being to reduce the force left to defend Fort Washington, which it was agreed, without any recorded dissenting voice, should be retained as long as possible. If Lee was the author of that change, perhaps it may still further diminish his credit for military skill, when the history of the capture of Fort Washington shall be rewritten.

Four days before, he wrote to Congress from Amboy, expressing his confidence that the attack of General Washington's lines was a measure too absurd for a man of Mr. Howe's genius; that they would put New York city in a respectable state of defence, and direct their operations towards Philadelphia, either by the Delaware or through the

Jerseys. His plan for this exigency was an army of ten thousand men to be assembled and stationed somewhere about Trenton. It is not unreasonable to suppose that Lee would have been gratified with such a command.

When the army marched from the heights of Harlem, Lee's division was stationed near King's Bridge, to protect the rear, and he found ample occupation during the tedious transportation of the baggage and artillery, which occupied several days. Fortunately the British made no serious attempt to disturb his progress; and he at length brought up his division, joining the main army at White Plains, where he is said to have condemned the position of the Continental Army as most execrable. The post, however, seemed to be too strongly taken for Howe to attempt it; and he retired towards King's Bridge.

As soon as it became certain that his next movement would be to the Jerseys, and so to threaten Philadelphia, Washington crossed the Hudson, and threw himself in front of the enemy, leaving General Lee in the position which he then occupied, with a force of seven thousand men, while Heath was ordered to the defence of the Highlands, with three thousand men.

At that time, commenced that famous retreat through the Jerseys, so thrilling in its interest to every American heart. And from the day on which Lee was left in a separate command, he seems to

have been governed by one purpose and animated by one spirit—a spirit of anything but patriotism—a purpose to gratify his own personal ambition, at any cost. I have spoken of his friends in Congress. That there was a party in Congress, during the whole subsequent period of the war, bitterly hostile to Washington, is the only theory which can explain the most serious difficulties which he had to encounter. The unavoidable misfortunes and unfortunate issue of the campaign, though originating in causes entirely beyond his control, stimulated the spirit of hostility to the Commander-in-Chief, which not long afterwards assumed a most formidable aspect, not only in Congress, but in the army. For my present purpose, however, it is unnecessary to do more than allude to these intrigues, as Lee's power to do mischief in this connection was nearly at an end.

Fort Washington fell on the 16th November, and as Fort Lee was only of importance in conjunction with it, that too was speedily abandoned. On the 20th, Lee wrote to a prominent member of Congress (a letter I believe never before made public).

CHARLES LEE TO BENJAMIN RUSH.

"Camp, November 20th, 1776.

"My dear Rush:

"The affair of Fort Washington cannot surprise you at Philadelphia more than it amazed and stun-

ned me. I must entreat that you will keep what I say to yourself; but I foresaw, predicted, all that has happened; and urged the necessity of abandoning it; for could we have kept it, it was of little or no use. Let these few lines be thrown into the fire, and in your conversations only acquit me of any share of the misfortune—for my last words to the General were—draw off the garrison, or they will be lost. You say I ought to desire the General to press the Congress for the necessary articles. I have done it a thousand times, and the men are now starving for the want of blankets. I confess your apathy amazes me. You make me mad—You have numbers—your soldiers do not want courage—but such a total want of sense pervades all your counsels that Heaven alone can save you. Inclosed are some hints. I could say many things—let me talk vainly—had I the powers I could do you much good—might I but dictate one week—but I am sure you will never give any man the necessary power—did none of the Congress ever read the Roman History? Adieu, my dear Rush,

"Yours most sincerely,

"CHARLES LEE.

"1st. You must have an army—this army cannot be had on the terms proposed—give 'em the full bounty and list 'em only for a year and a half—in short you have so bungled your affairs that you must come into any terms.

"2d. Put some military man at the head of the Board of War.

"3d. Strip even yourselves of blankets."

We can hardly misunderstand his allusion to the political expedient to which the Roman senate resorted, in order to repress disorders among the people, and to unite the forces of the commonwealth against its enemies. By it, they placed themselves and the state, for a limited time, under the power of a single person, who, with the title of Dictator, or Master of the People, should at his pleasure, dispose of the state and of all its resources; thus intrusting all power to a single man, on the sole security of his personal character, arbitrary and irresponsible, and limited only in the time of its exercise.

The crisis indeed demanded a Dictator; but it was a happy day for humanity which saw a Washington invested with such powers as these. How different the fate of America in other hands! Well might the Committee of Congress say, in communicating to him their resolutions: "Happy it is for this country, that the general of their forces can safely be intrusted with the most unlimited power, and neither personal security, liberty, nor property, be in the least degree endangered thereby."

The hint to "put some military man at the head of the Board of War," was acted upon in the following year, when the board was new modelled and General Gates appointed to preside.

Lee was now at the height of his popularity and influence; the star of his destiny was at its zenith. Many seem to have believed that there was "no officer in the army of equal experience and merit," and it was said that he was "the idol of the officers, and possessed still more the confidence of the soldiery."

How entirely the popular judgment was carried away in the exaggerated estimate which had been formed of Lee's military capacity, is illustrated by the fact that even in the military family of Washington, was one, who, although his personal relations were of the most intimate, responsible, and confidential nature, was swept away with the current. The following letter is already famous in the history of that period. The copy I use, has been corrected by a careful comparison with one "signed by Reed, and endorsed in his own hand"—in the autograph collection of Mr. Tefft, of Savannah, Georgia.

JOSEPH REED TO CHARLES LEE.

"Hackensack, November 21st, 1776.

"Dear General:

"The letter you will receive with this, contains my sentiments with respect to your present station; but besides this, I have some additional reasons for most earnestly wishing to have you where the principal scene of action is laid. I do not mean to flatter or praise you at the expense of any other; but, I confess, I do think that it is entirely owing to

you, that this army and the liberties of America, so far as they are dependent on it, are not totally cut off. You have decision, a quality often wanting in minds otherwise valuable; and I ascribe to this our escape from York-Island, from King's Bridge, and the Plains; and I have no doubt, had you been here, the garrison of Mount Washington would now have composed a part of this army: under these circumstances, I confess I ardently wish to see you removed from a place where I think there will be little call for your judgment and experience, to the place where they are like to be so necessary. Nor am I singular in this my opinion: every gentleman of the family, the officers, and soldiers, generally, have a confidence in you: the enemy constantly inquire where you are, and seem to me to be less confident when you are present.

"Colonel Cadwallader, through a special indulgence, on account of some civilities shewn by his family to General Prescott, has been liberated from New-York without any parole. He informs, that the enemy have a southern expedition in view; that they hold us very cheap in consequence of the late affair at Mount Washington, where both the place of defence and execution were contemptible. If a real defence of the lines was intended, the number was far too few; if the Fort only, the garrison was too numerous by half. General Washington's own judgment, seconded by representations from us, would have saved the men and their arms; but,

unluckily, General Greene's judgment was contrary. This kept the General's mind in a state of suspense till the stroke was struck. Oh, General! an indecisive mind is one of the greatest misfortunes that can befall an army: how often have I lamented it this campaign!

"All circumstances considered, we are in a very awful and alarming state, one that requires the utmost wisdom and firmness of mind.

"As soon as the season will admit, I think yourself and some others should go to Congress, and form the plan of the new army; point out their defects to them, and, if possible, prevail on them to bind their whole attention to this great object—even to the exclusion of every other. If they will not, or cannot, do this, I fear all our exertions will be vain in this part of the world. Foreign assistance is soliciting, but we cannot expect they will fight the whole battle—but artillery and artillerists must be had, if possible.

"I intended to have said more, but the express is waiting, and I must conclude with my clear and explicit opinion, that your presence is of the last importance.

"I am, with much affection and regard,

"Your most affectionate,

"Humble Servant,

"J. Reed.

"Major Gen. Lee,

"White Plains."

Washington's instructions to Lee were, that if the enemy should remove the whole, or the greatest part of their force, to the west of Hudson's river, he should follow, with all possible despatch, leaving the militia and invalids to cover the frontiers of Connecticut, etc. These instructions were very soon made positive and peremptory orders, in view of the necessities of the retreating army. On the 20th of November, Washington thought it advisable that he should move—on the 21st he advised Lee "that the publick interest requires" it. Lee on the same day, writes to the President of the Council of Massachusetts, that "before the unfortunate affair of Fort Washington, he was of opinion that the two armies—that on the east and that on the west side of North river—must rest each on its own bottom; that the idea of detaching . . . from one side to the other was chimerical; but to harbor such a thought in our present circumstances is absolute insanity." He further advises the President that "we must depend upon ourselves." On the same day, he received from Reed a "short billet, which he did not well understand." The following extract from General Heath's published journal, furnishes the explanation:

"*November 20th.* Just at evening, an express which General Heath had sent down to General Washington, before he had any knowledge of what had happened, returned with a most alarming account of what he had seen with his own eyes, viz.,

that the Americans were rapidly retreating, and the British as rapidly pursuing. The Adjutant-General [Reed] wished to write to General Lee, but he had neither pen, ink, nor paper with him. The Light-Horseman had a rough piece of wrapping-paper in his pocket, and the Adjutant-General had an old pencil. Bringing these two together, he wrote to Gen. Lee: 'Dear General, we are flying before the British. I pray—' and the pencil broke. He then told the Light-Horseman to carry the paper to General Lee, and tell him that he was verbally ordered to add, after I pray—'you push and join us.' The Light-Horseman, when he arrived at Gen. Heath's, was both fatigued and wet. He requested that one of his brother horsemen might proceed to Gen. Lee; but he was told that no other could discharge the duty enjoined on him by the Adjutant-General, and that Gen. Lee might wish to make many inquiries of him. He was therefore refreshed and pushed on."

General Lee, instead of moving his division, or any part of it, wrote back to General Heath that he had just received a recommendation, not a positive order, from General Washington, to move the corps under his command to the other side of the river. After giving some presumptive reasons for General Washington's recommendation, which he finds it impossible to comply with, to "any purpose," he desires and requests General Heath to order two thousand of his corps, under a Brigadier-

General, to cross the river, and wait Washington's further orders—promising to replace that number of troops, from his own command, as soon as "a necessary job" was finished—which he believed would "be finished to-morrow."

General Heath referred to his instructions, which he found did not admit of any construction in accordance with Lee's request, which he therefore did not comply with.

Lee continued his attempts to interfere with Heath's command; and, on the 23d November, announced his intention to take two thousand from that division into the Jerseys. Afterwards, upon Heath's refusal to do so, he undertook to order the detachment himself, but finally desisted, upon more mature reflection.

On the 22d, he again addressed President Bowdoin, and here he takes a bolder tone:

GEN. LEE TO THE PRESIDENT OF MASS. COUNCIL.

"Camp near Phillipsburg, 22d November, 1776.

"Sir:

"Indecision bids fair for tumbling down the goodly fabrick of American freedom, and with it, the rights of mankind. 'Twas indecision of Congress prevented our having a noble army, and on an excellent footing. 'Twas indecision in our military councils which cost us the garrison of Fort Washington, the consequence of which must be fatal, unless remedied in time by a contrary spirit.

Enclosed I send you an extract of a letter from the General, on which you will make your comments; and I have no doubt, but that you will concur with me in the necessity of raising immediately an army to save us from perdition. Affairs appear in so important a crisis, that I think even the resolves of the Congress must no longer too nicely weigh with us. We must save the community in spite of the ordinances of the Legislature. There are times when we must commit treason against the laws of the State for the salvation of the State. The present crisis demands this brave, virtuous kind of treason. For my own part (and I flatter myself my way of thinking is congenial with that of Mr. Bowdoin's) I will stake my head and reputation on the propriety of the measure . . . "

On the 24th, Washington from Newark, corrects Lee's mistake, in supposing that he wanted any portion of Heath's command. "It is your division I want to have over." At this time, he writes so fully and explicitly, as to remove the possibility of any misapprehension. He also cautions him about his route, and desires frequent expresses to advise of his approaches. On the same day, Lee at last acknowledges receipt of orders, and promises to endeavor to put them in execution: while at the same time he writes to Reed, in answer to his "most obliging, flattering" letter of the 21st; laments with him "that fatal indecision," which is

worse than stupidity or cowardice; half excuses, half justifies his delay; intimates an enterprise which he has on hand, and which he waits for—when, he concludes, "I shall then fly to you; for, to confess a truth, I really think our Chief will do better with me than without me."

On the 26th, he still lingers, responding very tartly to General Heath, who had told him that he "considered it to be his duty to obey his instructions, especially those which are positive and poignant"—that "the Commander-in-chief is now separated from us; I of course command on this side the water; for the future I will and must be obeyed."

On the 27th, Washington tells Lee, that his previous letters had been so full and explicit, he thought it unnecessary to say more, and confessed his expectation that Lee would have been sooner in motion. Lee replies on the 30th, assuring Washington that he had done all in his power—that he will pass the river in two days more, when he will be glad to have instructions; but says also, "I could wish you would bind me as little as possible, not from any opinion, I do assure you, of my own parts, but from a persuasion that detached generals cannot have too great latitude, unless they are very incompetent indeed." He added in a postscript "that he was a good deal distressed by the strictness of General Heath's instructions."

Washington from Brunswick, Dec. 1st, entreats

Lee to hasten his march, or it may be too late to answer any valuable purpose. On the 3d, he repeats his anxiety; while Congress, on the 2d, had resolved that the committee for establishing expresses be directed to send Colonel Stewart, or any other officer, express to General Lee, to know where and in what situation he and the army with him were.

Lee, finally quitting Westchester with great reluctance, began to pass the river on the 2d December. He writes from Haverstraw on the 4th, acknowledging the receipt of Washington's pressing letter; and concludes, "It is paltry to think of our personal affairs when the whole is at stake; but I entreat you to order some of your suite to take out of the way of danger my favourite mare, which is at Hunt Wilson's, three miles the other side of Princeton!"

We next hear of him at Ringwood Iron Works, where, having lost three of his best camp horses, he sends back an express to Heath to advertise them, offering a reward for their recovery.

From Pompton, on the 7th, he writes again to Governor Cooke of Rhode Island, to whom he gives the benefit of his views on the qualifications of general officers:—"Theory joined to practice, or a heaven-born genius, can alone constitute a general. As to the latter, God Almighty indulges the modern world very rarely with the spectacle; and I do not know, from what I have seen, that he has been

more profuse of this ethereal spirit to the Americans than to other nations."

General Washington had, in the meantime, attempted to return to Princeton from Trenton, but was obliged to recede, and was now on the other side of the Delaware, still without any certain intelligence of General Lee, and utterly unable to account for the slowness of his march.

From Morristown, on the 8th of December, Lee writes to Congress and to Washington, stating his force at four thousand; and that if he was not assured that Washington was considerably reinforced and very strong, he would immediately join him! As it was, he intended to take post at Chatham, and so hang on the enemy's rear.

Well might General Greene think at this juncture, that General Lee must be confined within the lines of some general plan, or else his operations would be independent of those of the Commander-in-Chief!

On the 9th, he is at Chatham, "in hopes," as he writes to Heath, "to re-conquer the Jerseys, which were really in the hands of the enemy, before my arrival." At this time, too, he continues his letters to the New England Governors, and impresses upon them that unless they renew their exertions with redoubled vigor, all is lost; suggesting also, the propriety of a convention of the New England States, to consult on the great affairs of their safety, and of counteracting the enemy in their future operations.

On the 10th and 11th, Washington renewed his entreaties, reminding Lee of the fatal consequences that must attend the loss of Philadelphia, and that the force with him was weak and entirely incompetent to save that city. These letters did not reach Lee, but were received by his successor in the command. His disgraceful neglect of duty and disobedience of orders, were at last to have an end; and in the series of Providential interpositions, which we cannot fail to recognize with devout gratitude, for the preservation of American liberty, none is more striking than that which terminated at this time the power of Lee to do mischief to the cause.

Lee's last communication to Washington was dated at Morristown, December 11th, and is in his hand-writing, although he speaks of himself in the third person. The original is endorsed: "From General Lee," and was read in Congress on the 10th February following:

GENERAL LEE TO GENERAL WASHINGTON.

"Morristown, December y^e^ 11th, 1776.

"We have three thousand men here at present; but they are so ill-shod that we have been obliged to halt these two days for want of shoes. Seven regiments of Gates's corps are on their march, but where they actually are, is not certain. General Lee has sent two officers this day; one to inform him where the Delaware can be crossed above

Trenton; the other to examine the road towards Burlington, as General Lee thinks he can, without great risk, cross the great Brunswick post road, and by a forced night's march, make his way to the ferry below Burlington. Boats should be sent up from Philadelphia to receive him. But this scheme he only proposes, if the head of the enemy's column actually pass the river. The militia in this part of the Province seem sanguine. If they could be sure of an army remaining amongst 'em, I believe they would raise a very considerable number."

This letter shows no intention to comply with the orders of Washington. He could have reached the Delaware by a forced march in a few hours, by the way of Vealtown, Germantown, Potterstown, Pitstown, and Alexandria, near which latter place he had been instructed to cross, and suitable preparations had been made to enable him to do so, by order of Washington. Under all the disadvantages of their condition, which were very great, the troops actually crossed, after being relieved of his command, at Easton, further up the river, on the 16th of December, and joined Washington on the 20th. Sullivan had changed the route to avoid a considerable body of the enemy, who were pushing forward on his left to intercept him, before he reached the river. He had received Washington's earnest letters of the 10th and 11th, addressed to Lee, and pressed on to join the main army as soon

as possible. Having encamped at Germantown, on the night of the 13th, he marched the next day at 11 o'clock, and, diverging at Pitstown, reached Bethlehem township that night. On the 15th, he marched at daybreak and all day, reaching Phillipsburg, at 10 o'clock at night. Some of the troops crossed the Delaware to Easton the same night, but they were not all safe with their baggage beyond the river until the next day.

It appears to have been Lee's purpose to seize a favorable opportunity, when the British army had extended their line towards the Delaware by Brunswick and Princeton, to make an independent demonstration in their rear, and cut their line of communication. It was obvious that the British chain was too extensive, and invited such a movement. There could be no doubt of the advantages to accrue in the event of its success; and the presence of so considerable a force in his rear was a source of no little anxiety to General Howe, especially as the volunteers in the country were very active and enterprising. About one thousand militia were at this time collected under the command of Colonel Jacob Ford, jun., at Springfield, seven miles west of Elizabethtown, to watch the motions of the enemy, their own subsequent motions to be directed according to circumstances. Lee's force was also continually increasing; three regiments from Ticonderoga, which he had intercepted with orders to join him, were daily expected; and he promised the

principal men that a detachment should remain for the protection of the State.

He lingered about Morristown several days, and ordered Sullivan to march for Germantown, early in the morning of the 12th of December. These were the last orders received by Sullivan from Lee. The troops encamped in the woods near Vealtown, a village in Bernard township, on the night of the 12th, and renewed their march on the morning of the 13th, towards Germantown.

Lee himself was at Baskingridge on the morning of the 12th, from which place he wrote to the Rev. James Caldwell, an active and influential patriot, at or near Chatham, with whom and Colonel Ford, at or near Springfield, he seems to have kept up at this time a very constant communication. Caldwell's reply shows his zeal to gratify Lee's anxiety to be constantly advised of the motions of the enemy, and assured him that their army had very generally marched forward; indeed, all except guards of the different posts. He also states that it was considered advisable to move the militia back to Chatham, as for various reasons assigned, it was thought they could better serve the cause by lying at that place "till the expected army approaches for their support."

The tenor of Lee's entire correspondence indicates his purpose to act separately, not only with his own troops, but with those coming from the Northern army, although Washington had given

him no such instructions; but on the contrary, expected those troops to march forward and join him as soon as possible. In this connection, Mr. Caldwell's "expected army" is significant.

Whether any other motives than those connected with his wish to obtain the intelligence just mentioned influenced his movements, I am unable to state. General Greene, in a letter written after receiving news of his capture, spoke of his "strange infatuation," and General Sullivan of the "fatality" by which he was induced to expose himself; but it is certain that neither entertained for a moment the suspicion that he designedly threw himself into the hands of the enemy, and such a design is incredible in view of all the circumstances of the case.

Still there may have been other motives of convenience or personal gratification, but certainly none could be less creditable than his insatiable ambition and ungovernable selfishness. His conduct did not admit of excuse, much less of justification; and it is unnecessary to speculate upon the probable consequences, had he been successful. "Under the sole guidance of his own judgment and self-will, he was presumptuously driving on, and the misfortunes which followed were the result of his own obstinacy and misconduct, not of necessity."

About noon, on Friday, the 13th of December, 1776, General Lee, with several aids, and a small guard, were at White's tavern, near Baskingridge, seven miles from Morristown—twenty-one miles

from the nearest post of the enemy, and four miles from the encampment, which his division had left in the morning.

The British had, at this time, pushed forward to the Delaware, with the hope of getting to Philadelphia. Their first division reached Trenton soon after the rear-guard of the American main army had crossed. Their rear division, which was commanded by Lord Cornwallis, halted at Maidenhead, six miles from Trenton, and at one o'clock on the morning of the 9th December, marched to Corriel's Ferry, thirteen miles higher up the Delaware, expecting to find boats there and in the neighborhood, sufficient to pass the river; but in this they were disappointed, as the Americans had taken the precaution to destroy or secure on the south side, all the boats which could possibly be employed for that purpose.

The passage of the Delaware being thus rendered impracticable, Lord Cornwallis returned and took post at Pennington, where his division remained till the 14th of December, the first still continuing at Trenton, when "the weather having become too severe to keep the field, and the winter cantonments having been arranged, the troops marched from both places to their respective stations." I cannot help remarking, as I quote this complacent statement of General Howe, how soon Washington at Trenton and Princeton was to disturb his "arrangements," point out "the necessity

of an alteration in the cantonments," and compel him to "find it impossible to hold posts of seventy or eighty miles in extent with only ten thousand men."

During Lord Cornwallis's stay at Pennington, a patrol of thirty dragoons from the Sixteenth Regiment (Burgoyne's Regiment of Queen's Light Dragoons), was sent out to gain further intelligence of Lee's division, whose progress they watched with great jealousy. Lieutenant-Colonel Harcourt (afterwards Earl Harcourt, F. M.), who is said to have expressed hopes before he left England, that he should take Lee, desired and obtained the direction of this detachment. Banastre Tarleton, afterwards so well known in the southern campaigns, at that time a cornet in the King's Dragoon Guards, and a volunteer with the forces in America, had the direction of the advanced guard of the party.

While scouring the country, they obtained intelligence of Lee's position, succeeded in surprising the guard, and surrounded the house before he was aware of his danger. Major William Bradford, one of his aids, who was present and escaped, stated that the party were conducted by a tory who was with General Lee the evening before, complaining of the loss of a horse taken by the army. He found where the General was to lodge and breakfast, and that he was to be at White's tavern about noon. He left them, rode eighteen miles in the night to Brunswick, and returned with the party

of Light Horse. Most of the American accounts of the affair agree in charging the tories with having betrayed him. On the other hand, the English accounts state that Harcourt's party fell in with a messenger, bearing a letter from Lee, who was induced by threats or promises to return as their guide. One states that "the wafer of the letter was still wet, which showed the writer was not far off." The accounts are not inconsistent—information may have been given by the tories, and as the Light Horse approached they may have seized the messenger, who had recently left the General.

Harcourt's disposition was made with great skill, and executed "with infinite address and gallantry." As he came in sight of the house, he detached Tarleton, who dashed forward with six men to secure the doors, followed by the remainder of the party at a distance of about one hundred paces. Harcourt immediately summoned the house, with threats to set fire to it, and put every man in it to the sword, if the General did not surrender.

The surprise was so complete that great consternation prevailed among the General's party. The Light Horse, however, were fired upon from the house, and two or three were killed (one of whom was a cornet), and others wounded. There were several French officers with Lee, and one of them took aim at Colonel Harcourt with his fusil, which the Colonel observing, bent his head, and the shot took away the ribbon of his hair. He

was immediately disposed of by the dragoons, and the fire from the house was very smartly returned. The General's guard had been carelessly disposed at an out-building, and the sentry at the door of the house, when he saw the dragoons coming, at first mistook them for his own people, but soon perceived his mistake by their swords, which were different from those used by the Americans. The guard rallied as the alarm was given, and attempted to join in the defence, but they were immediately overpowered with merciless severity.

Some of them were wounded, two were killed while attempting to escape, and the remainder probably owed their safety to Harcourt's haste and anxiety to make sure of his prize.

The only person who seems to have retained his presence of mind and behaved with suitable courage on the occasion, was M. Jean Louis de Virnejoux, a French gentleman, who had been appointed to the rank and pay of Captain by brevet, and commissioned accordingly on the 19th September, 1776. He had already in his few weeks of service, won the best opinions of his qualities as a gentleman and soldier; and, on this occasion, he acted with the greatest bravery and resolution in defending the General. Had his advice been taken, or all who were there evinced the same spirit, probably Lee would have escaped. It is a real pleasure to speak of such a man, and to brighten this page with the record of his virtues.

The resistance, however, was short. Harcourt again summoned the house, renewing his threats with a solemn oath. Finding concealment impossible, and further resistance useless, Lee made his appearance at the door, and in the most submissive manner, surrendered his sword to Colonel Harcourt, begging him to spare his life. Several of the English accounts state that he fell upon his knees to Harcourt, and all agree that he behaved in a most cowardly manner, apparently frantic with terror and disappointment. One writer says, after describing his humiliation to Harcourt, "suddenly recovering his panic, he flew into a violent rant of his having for a moment obtained the supreme command—giving many signs of wildness and of a mind not perfectly right."

Captain Thomas Harris, afterwards Lord Harris, states, in his journal, that "Lee behaved as cowardly in this transaction as he had dishonorably in every other. After firing one or two shots from the house, he came out and entreated our troops to spare his life." Harris continues, "Had he behaved with proper spirit, I should have pitied him, and wished that his energies had been exerted in a better cause. I could hardly refrain from tears when I first saw him, and thought of the miserable fate in which his obstinacy has involved him. He says he has been mistaken in three things:

"1st. That the New England men would fight.

"2d. That America was unanimous, and

"3d. That she could afford two men for our one."

He was somewhat roughly handled on being seized, and his captors, if they did not treat him with great indignity, certainly displayed very little regard for his comfort or appearance. He had presented himself without his hat or outside coat, and although he earnestly requested permission to get them, was very peremptorily refused.

He was mounted on the guide's horse, tied on both legs and arms, and with one of his aids who was mounted behind a dragoon, was hurried away at a furious speed towards Brunswick, where upon his arrival, "about three hours afterwards, the cannon in the British camp played furiously, rejoicing on the occasion;" which was also signalized with much less dignified demonstrations of delight by the soldiery. He entertained some hope of a rescue at first, and told Harcourt he was "not sure of his prey;" but as his expectation diminished, and finally all hope of it vanished, he became sullen and very much dispirited. He said to his captors—admitting the weakness of the American army, and his own confidence in British strength and zeal, when roused,—"The game is nearly at an end."

Afterwards, on being brought in at Brunswick, he is said to have claimed the benefit of Howe's proclamation, and demanded to be received under it; but, on being refused, as being found in arms and not entitled to it, and told that he would be

tried as a deserter, he flew into the most unbounded rage, and exclaimed against the repeated acts of false faith and treachery which had reduced him to his present situation. He also desired an interview with General Howe, which was not granted at that time; and I have reason to believe that General Howe refused to see him for a long time after his capture. This must have been a severe trial to Lee, for he had before publicly professed "the highest love and reverence" for General Howe, stating that he had "courted his acquaintance and friendship, not only as a pleasure, but as an ornament," and "flattered himself that he had obtained it."

Soon after his capture, he addressed the following letter to his old friend and associate, Captain Primrose Kennedy, of the 44th Regiment:

GENERAL LEE TO CAPTAIN KENNEDY

"SIR:

"The fortune of war, the activity of Colonel Harcourt, and the rascality of my own troops, have made me your prisoner. I submit to my fate, and I hope that whatever may be my destiny, I shall meet it with becoming fortitude; but I have the consolation of thinking, amidst all my distresses, that I was engaged in the noblest cause that ever interested mankind. It would seem that Providence had determined that not one freeman should

be left upon earth; and the success of your arms more than foretell one universal system of slavery. Imagine not, however, that I lament my fortune, or mean to deprecate the malice of my enemies; if any sorrow can at present affect me, it is that of a great continent apparently destined for empire, frustrated in the honest ambition of being free, and enslaved by men, whom unfortunately I call my countrymen.

"To Colonel Harcourt's activity every commendation is due; had I commanded such men, I had this day been free; but my ill-fortune has prevailed, and you behold me no longer hostile to England, but contemptible and a prisoner!

"I have not time to add more, but let me assure you, that no vicissitudes have been able to alter my sentiments; and that as I have long supported those sentiments in all difficulties and dangers, I will never depart from them but with life.

"C. Lee."

The aid, who was taken with Lee, was M. de Gaiault. This gentleman, a Lieutenant-Colonel in the French service, had recently arrived at Boston with powder and arms, in the Hancock and Adams, Captain Smith, from Nantes. On his way to tender his services to General Washington, he had joined General Lee, who made him his aid-de-camp, only two days before he was taken. When he heard the firing of the Light Dragoons, he ran out

hastily, and was immediately made prisoner. He shared their rude treatment with Lee, in respect to which he afterwards presented a remonstrance to General Howe. At Brunswick, M. Gaiault was fortunate enough to meet an old acquaintance, a British officer, who provided him with quarters where he was taken good care of, and supplied him with necessaries. He was also under much less restraint than his fellow-prisoner.

The intelligence of Lee's capture reached his troops as they were on the march. The statement of a private soldier in one of the Rhode Island Regiments, preserves for us the account of an eye-witness. He saw Major Bradford, who had escaped, as he rode up to the line. General Sullivan met him and received the news, which immediately spread through the whole division. They halted some time in the road, and Sullivan "rode through the line giving orders, to show that they still had a commander left, and did not appear to regret the loss of Lee." The writer adds, "I confess it was not a subject of any grief to me, as I had known him before he was appointed in our army, and thought we could manufacture as good generals out of American stuff as he was." The prevailing impression, however, must have been one of discouragement; and others mention the "dejected spirits" with which they renewed their march and pursued their route to the Delaware.

Sullivan attempted to regain him, but the ra-

pidity of Harcourt's movement was such as to make all attempts fruitless. One party pursued the dragoons for several miles, but "were too late," and rejoined the army in the evening at Germantown.

One additional memorial of that eventful period remains to be noticed. The last letter of General Lee before his capture, was addressed to his friend Gates, who had been ordered to hasten on from the northern army, with all the disposable troops, and join Washington beyond the Delaware. He had left the Hudson at Esopus (Kingston), and thence proceeded through the then uncultivated country of the Minisink, nearly on the route of the present Delaware and Hudson Canal, inclining to the left to Sussex Court House, about thirty miles northwest of Morristown, in the hope of falling in with and joining the division of General Lee.

The letter is significant enough, and is an appropriate finale to Major General Charles Lee's military service in the Jerseys in 1776. I hold the original letter in my hand, from which I will read. [*See* FAC-SIMILE No. I.]

GENERAL LEE TO GENERAL GATES.

"BASKING RIDGE, Dec'r y^e^ 1⅞th, 1776.

"MY DR GATES:

"The ingenious manoeuvre of Fort Washington has unhing'd the goodly fabrick We had been building—there never was so damn'd a stroke—*entre nous*, a certain great man is most damnably deficient

—He has thrown me into a situation where I have my choice of difficulties—if I stay in this Province I risk myself and Army and if I do not stay the Province is lost for ever—I have neither guides Cavalry Medicines Money Shoes or Stockings—I must act with the greatest circumspection—Tories are in my front rear and on my flanks—the Mass of the People is strangely contaminated—in short unless something which I do not expect turns up We are lost—our Counsels have been weak to the last degree—as to what relates to yourself if you think you can be in time to aid the General I wou'd have you by all means go You will at least save your army—it is said that the Whigs are determin'd to set fire to Philadelphia if They strike this decisive stroke the day will be our own—but unless it is done all chance of Liberty in any part of the Globe is forever vanish'd—Adieu, my Dr Friend—God bless you.

"CHARLES LEE."

Upon Lee's capture, great exultation was manifested by the British. They boasted of having taken the American Palladium—that the Americans could not stand long, as Lee was their chief man. The historian Gibbon, who had taken his seat in Parliament at the beginning of the contest between Great Britain and America; and supported with many a sincere and silent vote, the measures of the administration; preserves the gossip of the day in

London in one of his letters: "Lee is certainly taken . . . We are not clear whether he behaved with courage or pusillanimity when he surrendered himself; but Colonel Keene told me to-day that he had seen a letter from Lee since his confinement. He imputes his being taken to the alertness of Harcourt and cowardice of his own guard; hopes he shall meet his fate with fortitude, etc." Gibbon adds: "It is said he was to succeed Washington;" and also, referring to the news from Trenton, "We know nothing certain of the Hessians, but there *has* been a blow."

Among the Americans, his loss was greatly and sincerely deplored—although the circumstances attending his capture were almost equally regretted. The most generous spirit was manifested in Washington's private as well as public correspondence—full of regret for the loss which the service had sustained, and sympathy for Lee's personal sufferings—although he was obliged to regard the misfortune as the more vexatious, as it was by the captive General's own folly and imprudence, and without a view to effect any good, that he was taken prisoner.

He was still detained at Brunswick, a close prisoner under a strong guard, when Washington turned upon his pursuers, and at Trenton and Princeton justified the expectation of the Pennsylvania Council of Safety, who, in condoling with him on the loss of Lee, expressed their hope that it

might be in his power to close the campaign with honor to himself, and leave General Howe in a situation which should afford him little reason to boast.

These movements threw the enemy into great consternation at Brunswick, where were the British stores and baggage, and for a time an ominous anxiety prevailed in the lines. One of the English officers who was present, says: "The captive General Lee was not without his terrors on this extraordinary and sudden turn of fortune. General Matthews not knowing well how to dispose of him in this intricacy of situation, he followed the wagons, and was marched, guarded, through the line, then under arms, in silent and momentary expectation of the enemy—a perfect stranger to every thing that had happened, or to what end he was destined; he could only judge from the hurry and apparent confusion that something uncommon must have occasioned it; for every circumstance at that juncture seemed so big with event, that no person dared speak to him as he passed by, or take upon them to explain what he eagerly wished to discover. His looks presented a picture of dread and horror; strongly expressive of his persuasion that his fate had overtaken him, at a time when he apprehended no immediate danger—he was soon relieved from his distress."

He was brought to New York from Brunswick, on Monday the 13th of January, 1777, still very

strictly guarded. Rooms were fitted up for his reception in the City Hall, where he was treated with consideration and humanity. He was allowed to converse freely with the officers in whose custody he was placed, except "on the subject of the dispute with the colonies." The two officers on guard always dined with him, and he had leave to invite any other person he pleased. He was from the first regarded in the light of a traitor to his king, amenable to British military law as a deserter; and he unquestionably owed his life to the firmness of Washington and the Congress. Exaggerated accounts of the severity of his confinement produced remonstrance and threats of retaliation, and Howe's reply to the remonstrance being unsatisfactory, Congress directed some harsh measures with reference to five Hessian field officers and Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell, then prisoners, who were made special hostages for Lee's safety; but these were mitigated by the earnest interference of Washington. Still the exchange of prisoners was interrupted, until the demand should be complied with that General Lee be recognized as a prisoner of war.

General Howe was much embarrassed in respect to the law of the case, and wrote home for instructions. With characteristic professional caution, being "afraid of falling into a law scrape," he desired to have the opinion of the law officers of the Crown, in case he should be instructed to bring his prisoner

to trial. There had been some recent decisions in England, which had an awkward look, in respect to damages, in case Lee should escape conviction and bring an action for false imprisonment. The case of certain Bengal officers was referred to, and Lee's was still stronger. Being only on half-pay when he wrote his letter of resignation to Lord Barrington, he would undoubtedly plead: first, that a half-pay officer was not amenable to military law, and secondly, if he was, he had a right to resign. The reply of Lord George Germaine was—"As you have difficulties about bringing General Lee to trial in America, it is His Majesty's pleasure that you send him to Great Britain by the first ship of war." One of the London newspapers of the time states, that he was actually "placed on board a vessel at New York three several times in order to be brought to England; and the ship was absolutely on sail when Washington's letter to General Howe arrived at New York, the consequence of which was that the ship was stopped and the General re-landed."

Sir William Howe being unable to make any impression upon Washington, and being apprehensive that a close confinement of the Hessian officers would be the consequence of sending Lee to Great Britain, and that this would occasion much discontent among the foreign troops, retained Lee for further instructions. In a subsequent letter from the minister, he informs General Howe, that his

"motives for postponing General Lee's departure for Great Britain are approved by the king."

Congress had approved the course pursued by Washington, but expressed a new and "determined resolution to carry into execution the law of retaliation; that if any persons belonging to, or employed in, the service of the United States or any of them who now are, or hereafter may be, prisoners to Lord or General Howe, or any other commander of his Britannic Majesty's forces by sea or land, shall be sent to the realm of Great Britain, or any part of the dominion of the said king, to be there confined in common gaols of Great Britain, or any other place or places of confinement in pursuance of any act or acts of the British Parliament, or any other pretence whatever; it is the resolution of this Congress, to treat the prisoners now in our power, and such as hereafter may fall into our hands, in a manner as nearly similar as our circumstances will admit."

On the same day on which this resolution was adopted by Congress, June 10th, 1777, General Washington had very frankly, but firmly, indicated the same policy, in a letter to General Howe, in which he said, distinctly referring to the case of General Lee, "I think it necessary to add, that your conduct towards prisoners will govern mine."

Satisfied that no arguments would induce "Mr. Washington" to recede from his determination, and that it was "necessary to put an end to a fruitless ne-

gotiation," the king at last reluctantly consented to instruct Howe, "that Lee, having been struck off the half-pay list, shall, though deserving the most exemplary punishment, be deemed a prisoner of war, and he may be exchanged as such when you may think proper."

This despatch was received by General Howe, on the 12th of December, 1777. General Lee had been kept a close prisoner during the whole year that had elapsed since his capture. During most of the time, he remained in the City Hall; but while General Howe was pursuing his brief campaign in New Jersey, and secretly maturing the plan for the southern expedition, he was removed, June 7th, 1777, for a time on board the Centurion man-of-war, where he was permitted to walk the quarter-deck.

Two days afterwards, he wrote a letter to General Washington on the subject of Lord Drummond's parole. This individual, whose attempts at negotiation form a curious, though unimportant episode, in the history of the war, had given his parole of honor, that he would hold no correspondence directly or indirectly with those who were in arms against the colonies, nor go into any port or harbor occupied by the enemy, nor on board their ships. He had most flagrantly and openly violated his parole, and the most favorable construction of his intentions could only show "that an overweening vanity had betrayed him into a criminal breach

of honor." General Washington had occasion to administer to him a well-merited reproof "in terms that could not be flattering" to his Lordship, who attempted to vindicate himself, but without success. "The facts in the case were too obvious and indisputable to be extenuated by any testimony he produced, or by the mere assertion of honorable motives."

General Lee, however, professed to have really thought Lord Drummond an injured man, and offered himself as a volunteer instrument to obtain some reparation from General Washington. Nothing could be more characteristic than his letter, which follows:

GENERAL LEE TO GENERAL WASHINGTON.

"CENTURION, June 9th, 1777.

"MY DEAR SIR:

"Multiplicity of business, the miscarriage of letters or some accident has prevented you from doing what really is in my opinion an act of justice—I mean clearing up to the world the charge brought against Lord Drummond for a breach of Parole; after having read all the Papers relative to this subject, his letters to you, yours to him, Capt. Vanderput's, and the Parole, I declare solemnly that it does not appear to me that there is any one thing in his Lordship's conduct which merited even the shadow of censure. The intention of the Parole in restraining him from going on board

any of the King's ships was certainly to prevent intelligence being given of the state of the Continent. As this was manifestly the intention I could almost say that if even he had gone on board the Asia voluntarily altho' the terms of the Parole would not have been literally adhered to, the spirit would not have been violated, as it cannot possibly be supposed that he could give any intelligence which would have been new to Capt. Vanderput, to and from whose ship people were passing and repassing every day—but Capt. Vanderput's evidence puts it beyond all doubt that his Lordship did not go voluntarily but was compelled on board.

"A public charge from persons we esteem sinks deep in the mind of a man of sentiment and feeling. I really believe Lord Drummond to be such, and have reason to think that he has an esteem for you, at least from all I can learn he has ever spoken of you in the handsomest terms. Now, as it appears to me that there can be no doubt from the concurrence of every testimony of his having adhered as scrupulously as possible to the spirit of the Parole, as the affair is of so delicate a nature, as I am acquainted with your way of thinking, I repeat that I must ascribe it rather to a miscarriage of his letters than to any other cause that you have not done him that justice which, had you received them, I am persuaded you must have thought his due. I can perceive he is very much hurt at the charge, and his sensibility, I confess, increases the good

opinion I before had of him—Not only therefore justice to him but let me add, my Dear General, a regard for you obliges me to wish that this affair may be cleared up in some manner satisfactory to the party I think injured; it is a duty which I know if omitted cannot fail of giving much uneasiness hereafter to a man of your rectitude and humanity.

"I must observe in addition that I cannot imagine his Lordship's return after an absence of three months could administer any reasons for suspicion, for he must either have remained in the West Indies or have returned to some port in North America, as he was prevented by the spirit of the Parole from going to England,—indeed the terms of the Parole implied an obligation to return to New York. His long absence likewise from the Continent rendered it impossible for him to furnish any intelligence of the situation of affairs. Should it be asked, why a man in my present situation should interest myself so warmly in this business with which I myself had no concern? I must answer that not only my love of justice, my duty as a Gentleman, and my regard for you enjoin the task, but that I really feel myself personally obliged to Lord Drummond, for since my confinement he has shown a most generous, humane and disinterested attention to me. In the course of conversation this business was accidentally brought on the carpet. As I was a stranger to the circumstances, I was

anxious to be made acquainted with them. He submitted the papers to my perusal—I really thought him injured; assured him that it must have proceeded from mistake or the miscarriage of his letters, and offered myself as a volunteer instrument to obtain some reparation. Let me hear from you, My Dear General, as soon as possible, and on this subject.

"God preserve and bless you and send you every possible felicity is the prayer of one who is most truly and affectionately yours,

"CHARLES LEE."

"As I would not unnecessarily swell the packet I have been contented with sending the letters to and from Capt. Vanderput—which I think sufficient—This I do on the supposition that those sent have miscarried."

Mr. Sparks has given us the substance of Washington's answer. "With his usual firmness, he replied, that he had thoroughly investigated the subject at the time; that he had no disposition to injure Lord Drummond; that the impression left on his mind was deep and decided; and that no circumstances had since come to light, which tended to alter his opinion."

General Howe received the king's consent in Philadelphia, but transmitted orders to New York immediately to terminate Lee's long confinement. He was released on the 25th December, on parole,

to the full liberty of the city and its limits. From this time his condition was much more agreeable. Sir Henry Clinton and General Robertson placed horses at his command, and he took up his quarters with two of his oldest and warmest friends in the British service. In short, his situation was "rendered as easy, comfortable, and pleasant as possible, for a man who is in any sort a prisoner." In February, 1778, he won a prize of five hundred dollars, in the Alms House Lottery.

The embarrassment with respect to the exchanges of prisoners still continued, and his captivity was prolonged several months. It was not until late in the month of March that he was transferred to Philadelphia, with the prospect of a speedy exchange. He arrived in that city on the 25th of March. His parole was enlarged on the 5th April, when he availed himself of the privilege to visit the American camp and the Congress. On the 9th April, he arrived at Yorktown, in Pennsylvania, where Congress was then sitting. At this time, he had the opportunity of witnessing the denouement of the intrigues, which, after his own capture removed him from the scene, had elevated his old associate Gates into a rival of Washington! But the lesson was lost upon him. While he was at Yorktown, his exchange for Major General Prescott was finally arranged, 21st April, but he did not rejoin the army at Valley Forge until a month later—May 20th, 1778. The history of that

month belongs to another part of this review of his career.

I have said that the accounts of his harsh treatment were exaggerated. For this there is sufficient authority besides his own statement in a letter to Robert Morris, that "the General [Howe] has indeed treated me in all respects with kindness, generosity, and tenderness."

The English had a much less favorable opinion of Lee's abilities than he had secured in America. When it was reported in Europe several months before, that he had been captured, one of the wisest servants of the Crown, Sir Joseph Yorke, then minister at the Hague, wrote to Mr. Eden — that if he had not a thorough conviction in his own mind that the "unfortunate affair" in America would be brought to a happy issue in the course of the summer, he "should really have been concerned for the taking of Lee, convinced, from what I have seen and know of him, that he was the worst present which could be made to any army." And again, after he was taken: "I was one of those who expressed a sincere concern at the taking of Lee, in which nothing gave me pleasure but the masterly partisan stroke of Colonel Harcourt: it is impossible but Lee must puzzle every thing he meddles in, and he was the worst present the Americans could receive; my opinion has been verified much sooner than I wished, as the only stroke like officers which they have struck, hap-

pened after his being made prisoner." The capture of the Hessians and the masterly manoeuvres against the British, had enabled them to "find that he was not the only efficient officer in the American service."

The times, when Lee was taken, were gloomy enough for the Americans. They were indeed, as Thomas Paine then wrote in his stirring appeal to the patriots of '76, "the times that tried men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot would indeed, in such a crisis, shrink from the service of his country; while he that stood firm then, deserved the love and thanks of man and woman!" In the English camp, it was thought that Howe's successes had intimidated the leaders of the rebellion, and were about to induce a general submission—that further opposition was despaired of by all America, except a few desperate men in Washington's army, and that army reduced to less than thirty-five hundred men. The campaign projected by the British, too, for 1777, was portentous of evil to the United States, and expected in Europe to be decisive, where the friends of the Court were rejoicing upon the promising aspect of affairs in America; and the whole tone and spirit of the royalists in New York, was confident in the extreme.

The scattered notices which may be gleaned in the correspondence written from New York, at this time, are too vague and general, as well as uncertain, to furnish much light as to Lee's occupa-

tions; but I find one account which is particularly interesting. It states "that he has employed his leisure hours mostly in writing; and some were of opinion that he was employed in a plan of reconciliation, as he used often to say, that if the Americans had followed his advice, matters could never have gone to such a length. His tone is changed, and as he was always remarkable for his freedom of speech, he makes no scruple of condemning the Americans in very plain terms, for continuing the contest."

His tone was indeed changed:

> " . . . . Quantum mutatus ab illo
> Hectore!"

It was at this time that he abandoned the cause to which he had so solemnly devoted himself. He was wanting in the hour of trial! At the touch of misfortune, like the angel's spear, the disguises of cowardice and treachery fell away, and the pages upon which he recorded his own condemnation, vindicate his claim to a high place upon that list of traitors, of whom—to the sorrow and shame of humanity be it spoken—Judas was not the first, nor Benedict Arnold the last! While the Continental Congress were denouncing their most solemn vengeance in retaliation for any injury which he might receive at the hands of his captors—while Washington, forgetting the insults and injuries which had led to his misfortunes, was straining every

nerve in his behalf, and urging his requests upon Congress with constant zeal and sympathy—He was planning for the enemies of America, the ruin of the cause!

I hold the document in my hand — in Lee's own autograph—unmistakable and real. It is indorsed in the handwriting of Henry Strachey, who was then Secretary to the Royal Commissioners, Lord and Sir William Howe:

"*MR. LEE'S PLAN—29th March*, 1777."

[*See* Fac-simile No. II.]

"*As on the one hand it appears to me that by the continuance of the War America has no chance of obtaining the ends She proposes to herself; that altho by struggling She may put the Mother Country to very serious expence both in blood and Money, yet She must in the end, after great desolation havock and slaughter, be reduc'd to submit to terms much harder than might probably be granted at present—and as on the other hand Great Britain tho' ultimately victorious, must suffer very heavily even in the process of her victories, evry life lost and evry guinea spent being in fact worse than thrown away: it is only wasting her own property, shedding her own blood and destroying her own stregnth; and as I am not only perswaded from the high opinion I have of the humanity and good sense of Lord and General Howe*

that the terms of accommodation will be as moderate as their powers will admit, but that their powers are more ample than their Successors (should any accident happen) wou'd be vested with, I think myself not only justifiable but bound in conscience to furnish all the lights, I can, to enable 'em to bring matters to a conclusion in the most compendious manner and consequently the least expensive to both Parties—I do this with the more readiness as I know the most generous use will be made of it in all respects—their humanity will incline 'em to have consideration for Individuals who have acted from Principle and their good sense will tell 'em that the more moderate are the general conditions; the more solid and permanent will be the union, for if the conditions were extremely repugnant to the general way of thinking, it wou'd be only the mere patchwork of a day which the first breath of wind will discompose and the first symptoms of a rupture betwixt the Bourbon Powers and Great Britain absolutely overturn—but I really have no apprehensions of this kind whilst Lord and General Howe have the direction of affairs, and flatter myself that under their auspices an accommodation may be built on so solid a foundation as not to be shaken by any such incident—in this persuasion and on these principles I shall most sincerely and zealously contribute all in my power to so desirable an end, and if no untoward accidents fall out which no human foresight can guard against I will answer with my life for the success.

"*From my present situation and ignorance of certain facts, I am sensible that I hazard proposing things which cannot without difficulties be comply'd with; I can only act from surmise, therefore hope allowances will be made for my circumstances. I will suppose then that (exclusive of the Troops requisite for the security of Rhode Island and N. York) General Howe's Army (comprehending every species, British, Hessians and Provincials) amounts to twenty thoushand men capable to take the field and act offensively; by which I mean to move to any part of the Continent where occasion requires—I will suppose that the General's design with this force is to clear the Jersey's and take possession of Philadelphia—but in my opinion the taking possession of Philadelphia will not have any decisive consequences —the Congress and People adhering to the Congress have already made up their minds for the event; already They have turn'd their eyes to other places where They can fix their seat of residence, carry on in some measure their Government; in short expecting this event They have devis'd measures for protracting the War in hopes of some favourable turn of affairs in Europe—the taking possession therefore of Philadelphia or any one or two Towns more, which the General may have in view, will not be decisive—to bring matters to a conclusion, it is necessary to unhinge or dissolve, if I may so express myself, the whole system or machine of resistance, or in other terms, Congress Government—this system or*

machine, as affairs now stand, depends entirely on the circumstances and disposition of the People of Maryland Virginia and Pensylvania — if the Province of Maryland or the greater part of it is reduc'd or submits, and the People of Virginia are prevented or intimidated from marching aid to the Pensylvania Army the whole machine is dissolv'd and a period put to the War, to accomplish which, is, the object of the scheme which I now take the liberty of offering to the consideration of his Lordship and the General, and if it is adopted in full I am so confident of the success that I wou'd stake my life on the issue — I have at the same time the comfort to reflect, that in pointing out measures which I know to be the most effectual I point out those which will be attended with no bloodshed or desolation to the Colonies. As the difficulty of passing and of repassing the North River and the apprehensions from General Carlton's Army will I am confident keep the New Englanders at home, or at least confine 'em to the East side the River; and as their Provinces are at present neither the seat of Government strength nor Politicks I cannot see that any offensive operations against these Provinces wou'd answer any sort of Purpose — to secure N. York and Rhode Island against their attacks will be sufficient. On the supposition then, that General Howe's Army (including every species of Troops) amounts to twenty or even eighteen thousand men at liberty to move to any part of the Continent; as fourteen thousand will be

more than sufficient to clear the Jersey's and take possession of Philadelphia, I wou'd propose that four thoushand men be immediately embark'd in transports, one half of which shou'd proceed up the Patomac and take post at Alexandria, the other half up Chesepeak Bay and possess themselves of Annapolis. They will most probably meet with no opposition in taking possession of these Posts, and when possess'd they are so very strong by nature that a few hours work and some trifling artillery will secure them against the attacks of a much greater force than can possibly be brought down against them—their communication with the shipping will be constant and sure—for at Alexandria Vessels of a very considerable burthen (of five or six hundred Tons for instance) can lie in close to the shore, and at Annapolis within musket shot—all the necessaries and refreshments for an Army are near at hand, and in the greatest abundance—Kent Island will supply that of Annapolis and every part on both banks of the Patomac that of Alexandria. These Posts may with ease support each other, as it is but two easy days march from one to the other, and if occasion requires by a single days march, They may join [A] *and conjunctly carry on their operations wherever it shall be thought eligible to direct 'em; whether to take possession of Baltimore or post themselves on some spot on the Westward bank of the Susquehanna which is a point of the utmost importance—but here I must beg leave to observe that there is a measure*

which if the General assents to and adopts will be attended with momentous and the most happy consequences—I mean that from these Posts proclamations of pardon shou'd be issued to all those who come in at a given day, and I will answer for it with my life—that all the Inhabitants of that great tract southward of the Patapsico and lying betwixt the Patomac and Chesepeak Bay and those on the eastern Shore of Maryland will immediately lay down their arms—but this is not all, I am much mistaken if those potent and populous German districts, Frederic County in Maryland and York in Pensylvania do not follow their example—These Germans are extremely numerous, and to a Man have hitherto been the most staunch Assertors of the American cause; but at the same time are so remarkably tenacious of their property and apprehensive of the least injury being done to their fine farms that I have no doubt when They see a probability of their Country becoming the seat of War They will give up all opposition but if contrary to my expectations a force should be assembled at Alexandria sufficient to prevent the Corps detach'd thither from taking possession immediately of the place, it will make no disadvantageous alteration, but rather the reverse—a variety of spots near Alexandria on either bank of the Patomac may be chosen for Posts equally well calculated for all the great purposes I have mention'd—viz—for the reduction or compulsion to submission of the whole Province of Maryland for the preventing

or intimidating Virginia from sending aids to Pensylvania—for in fact if any force is assembled at Alexandria sufficient to oppose the Troops sent against it, getting possession of it, it must be at the expence of the more Northern Army, as they must be compos'd of those Troops which were otherwise destin'd for Pensylvania—to say all in a word, it will unhinge and dissolve the whole system of defence. I am so confident of the event that I will venture to assert with the penalty of my life if the plan is fully adopted, and no accidents (such as a rupture betwixt the Powers of Europe) intervenes that in less than two months from the date of the proclamation not a spark of this desolating war remains unextinguished in any part of the Continent.

"[A] *On the Road from Annapolis to Queen Ann there is one considerable River to be pass'd, but as the ships boats can easily be brought round from the Bay to the usual place of passage or Ferry, this is no impediment if the Two Corps chuse to unite They may by a single days march either at Queen Anns or Malbrough.*"

Such was the scheme of treason which Charles Lee, Major General, second in command in the American army of the Revolution, took "the liberty of offering to the consideration of his Lordship and the General," His Majesty's Commissioners, Lord and Sir William Howe! Its form and char-

acter do not admit the supposition that he had been tampered with, solicited, or approached in any way on the subject. It must have been the voluntary offering of cowardice, eager to purchase safety by treachery, and thus to open the way back to allegiance and protection! He had evidently regarded himself as "the Palladium," and with his own capture had lost all hope for the success of the Americans. So he threw himself upon the generosity of the Howes, and tried to make a virtue of his own selfishness; betraying his associates, while with a characteristic appeal for sympathy, he thought their "humanity" would incline Lord and General Howe "to have consideration for individuals who have acted from principle."

Although we are left mainly to conjecture the circumstances under which this plan was submitted to the Howes, it is proper to make such inferences as are warranted by their subsequent conduct of the war.

From the beginning of the winter of 1776–'77, General Howe had been sending to the ministry his plans for the next campaign. His primary object, repeatedly urged, was the junction of the two armies up and down the Hudson River. His own movement northward, accompanied with an irruption into New England, it was said, would "strike at the root of the rebellion, and put those Independent Hypocrites between two fires"—and "open the door wide for the Canada army." The princi-

pal features of these plans had received the approbation of the king, who, with the ministry, Parliament, and the nation, undoubtedly expected, by the possession of the Lakes and the North River, to complete the separation of the northern and southern colonies, and conquer America in detail.

But in his secret letter of the 2d of April, the General totally relinquished the idea of any offensive operation, except that to the southward, and a diversion occasionally upon the Hudson River. He informed the Secretary of State that the principal part of the plans formerly proposed could no longer be thought of; that the Jerseys must be abandoned, and Pennsylvania invaded only by sea. At the same time he transmitted to the ministry, a copy, in advance, of his confidential letter of the 5th April, to Sir Guy Carleton, then commanding in Canada, in which he said that little assistance was to be expected from him to facilitate the approach of the northern army—as "the operations already determined upon," would not admit of his detaching a corps to act up the Hudson River, in the beginning of the campaign. In the same letter, he informed General Carleton that he had intrusted to a special messenger "information of too delicate a nature to commit to paper, and of the utmost importance in favor of the northern army advancing to Albany." The new expedition which he had planned, was a "great secret" in New York, even after the embarkation of a portion of the troops.

When it came out, it is said that Sir Henry Clinton refused to believe it possible that Howe intended carrying the army to the southward. In the manuscript notes upon Stedman's history attributed to him, is the following: "I owe it to truth to say there was not I believe a man in the army except Lord Cornwallis and General Grant, who did not reprobate the movement to the southward, and see the necessity of a co-operation with General Burgoyne."

A cotemporary writer says: "It is impossible for the mind of man to conceive the gloom and resentment of the army, on the retreat from the Jerseys, and the shipping them to the southward; nothing but being present and seeing the countenances of the soldiers, could give an impression adequate to the scene; or paint the astonishment and despair that reigned in New York, when it was found that the North River was deserted, and Burgoyne's army abandoned . . . The ruinous and dreadful consequences were instantly foreseen and foretold; and despondence or execration filled every mouth. Had there been no Canada army to desert or to sacrifice, the voyage to the southward could only originate from the most profound ignorance or imbecility."

The evidence in the House of Commons, in the subsequent Parliamentary examinations, indicates that Howe did not consult many officers, and that almost all opinions were against the movement as

soon as it was known. Lord George Germaine, on the 8th June, 1779, defending the ministry, said: "that he did not understand the object of the southern expedition by the Capes of Virginia," and in general, the "absurd voyage to Chesapeake" was afterwards condemned, as a pernicious measure, producing fatal effects—the loss of Burgoyne's army, the French alliance, and so indirectly, most of the subsequent advantages of the Americans.

The influence of Lee's plan is easily recognized in the movements of the Howes, which were then so unintelligible to both armies. Their natural distrust of him must have had great weight in their determination, and may have prevented them from adopting it in full. They never satisfactorily explained their motives, though seriously challenged in the subsequent debates in Parliament. They might well be reluctant to admit that they had followed the suggestions of one who was personally so obnoxious to the king and ministry. Their failures certainly would not increase their readiness to allude to what had proved so fatal a gift. So they seem to have preserved the secret of the expedition. "A mystery" in Parliament then—it has continued to remain so to this day.

But however all this may be—whether or not, future investigations and discoveries shall prove that the plan did mainly influence the Howes in their determination—you will not hesitate in agreeing with me that the failure was no fault of its au-

thor. It is conceived in as wicked a spirit of treason as ever existed. To the extent of his knowledge of the then circumstances of both armies, it is perfectly adapted for entire success, and that it did not ruin the cause, we may thank that God who ruleth in the affairs of men.

There are many interesting points in which this "Plan" of treason, touches the subsequent career of its author, both in the American service and after his disgrace. I shall at present allude to but one of them, at the risk of leaving you in doubt which was the greater—his hypocrisy or his impudence.

Just before the evacuation of Philadelphia, Washington became convinced that the enemy intended to march through the Jerseys. Lee, only three days before they actually crossed the river, wrote to the Commander-in-chief as follows:

"My opinion is that if they are in a capacity to act offensively, they will, either immediately from Philadelphia, or, by a feint in descending the river as far as New Castle, and then turning to the right, march directly and rapidly towards Lancaster, by which means they will draw us out of our present position, and oblige us to fight on terms perhaps very disadvantageous; or that they will leave Lancaster and this army wide on the right, endeavour *to take post on the lower parts of the Susquehanna, and by securing a communication with their ships sent round into the bay for this purpose*, be furnished

with the means of encouraging and feeding the Indian war, broke out on the western frontier. This last plan I mention as a possibility, but as less probable than the former.

"If they are not in a capacity to act offensively, but are still determined to keep footing on the continent, there are *strong reasons to think, that they will not shut themselves up in towns, but take possession of some tract of country, which will afford them elbow room and sustenance, and which is so situated as to be the most effectually protected by their command of the waters; and* I HAVE PARTICULAR REASONS *to think that they have cast their eyes for this purpose on the lower counties of Delaware, and some of the Maryland counties on the Eastern shore. If they are resolved on this Plan, it certainly will be very difficult to prevent them, or remove them afterwards, as their shipping will give them such mighty advantages.* Whether they do or do not adopt any of these plans, there can no inconvenience arise from considering the subject, nor from devising means of defeating their purposes, on the supposition that they will.

"In short, I think it would be proper to put these queries to ourselves. Should they march directly towards Lancaster and the Susquehanna, or indirectly from New Castle, what are we to do? Should they, though it is less probable, leave this army and even Lancaster, wide on the right, and endeavour to establish themselves on the lower

parts of the Susquehanna, what are we to do? And, should they act only on the defensive, and attempt to secure to themselves some such tract of country as I have mentioned, what measures are we to pursue? These are matters I really think worthy of consideration."

Washington's reply of the same date, 15th June, 1778, contains the following passages:

"I have received your letter of this date, and thank you, as I shall any officer, over whom I have the honor to be placed, for his opinion and advice on matters of importance—especially when they proceed from the fountain of candor, and not from a captious spirit, or an itch for criticism . . . and here let me again assure you, that I shall be always happy in a free communication of your sentiments upon any important subject relative to the service, and only beg that they may come directly to myself. The custom, which many officers have, of speaking freely of things, and reprobating measures, which upon investigation, may be found to be unavoidable, is never productive of good, but often, of very mischievous consequences."

Lee seems to have had from the beginning of his service in the Continental army, a passion for a negotiation with the British Generals. Soon after he arrived before Boston, in 1775, his correspondence with his old friend Burgoyne, led to a proposal for a meeting which might "induce such explanations as might tend, in their consequences, to

peace." He submitted the proposal to the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, whose reply, while it renewed the expression of their confidence in his wisdom, discretion, and integrity, hinted so strongly at the probable distrust and jealousy, which might arise, that the project was abandoned. His first letter to Burgoyne was written from Philadelphia, just before his appointment to the army, and before he sent it, "he had the precaution to read it to several members of the Continental Congress." Even then he was guilty of a duplicity which falls little short of treachery. He held a language official and a language confidential, writing a private letter to Burgoyne (which has never yet seen the light) expressly referred to in the following letter from the British Secretary for Foreign Affairs to the French Minister. Is it unreasonable to suppose that Lee's confidences may have disclosed those early intimations so guardedly given of the secret aid of France, which occasioned the first step towards a foreign alliance by the appointment of the secret Committee of Foreign Affairs in 1775?

LORD ROCHFORD TO COUNT DE GUINES.

"September 8th, 1775.

"Milord Rochford presente ses complimens à son Excellence Monsieur le Compte de Guines, et a l'honneur de lui remettre les lettres imprimées de M. le General Burgoyne et M. Lee, et le prier de vouloir bien les lui renvoyer à son loisir. Milord

a l'honneur de confirmer à son excellence ce qu 'il lui assura hier au matin touchant ce qui a ēté confiē en ēcrit au General Burgoyne par M. Lee sur son honneur. Ces assurances se trouvent dans une lettre particuliere et confidentielle de M. Lee, laquelle n' est pas imprimée, et on ne sera pas fachē d' ētre en ētat de le contredire authentiquement."

Lee's last published letter to his old companion in arms was dated December 1, 1775. On the 4th, he wrote from the Camp on Prospect Hill, to his friend Rush:

"I have written a parting letter to Burgoyne, which in my opinion is the best of my performances. I believe it does not tally with your political creed in some parts—*but I am convinced that you have not virtue enough for independence; nor do I think it calculated for your happiness; besides I have some remaining prejudices as an Englishman*—but you will judge whether they are honest and liberal—if they shock you, be gentle in your censures."

Again, on his way through New Jersey to join Washington at Harlem, in 1776, he suggested to Congress a conference with Lord Howe, by some gentlemen in the simple character of individuals who are supposed to have influence, and in whom they could confide, to demand what terms he had to offer. This was just one month after the Staten Island conference, of the character and results of which he could hardly have been ignorant.

With Sir Henry Clinton, too, at Charleston, he was exchanging compliments, in 1776, and *in* 1778, *just before the evacuation of Philadelphia, and the British retreat across New Jersey, he was in correspondence with that officer* — a correspondence which, as well as later performances of a similar character, will be more fully noticed hereafter, in connection with the Battle of Monmouth, and his subsequent career. Much of the evidence of his unworthiness, in my possession, is so connected with his conduct on that occasion, and the discussions which followed, as to make that the proper place to present it. At present, I must content myself with the direct proof of the principal fact, with such brief illustration as the occasion will allow.

Lord and General Howe, in the month of February, 1777, are said to have attempted to open a negotiation with the Congress through General Lee. I am unable to resist the conclusion, that this correspondence, as it agrees in point of time, formed a part of Lee's attempt to be of service to the Crown, by betraying the cause of America. The rumors which prevailed in England and among the Loyalists in America, as well as the British army, indicate a strong expectation that Lee's application to Congress was about to result in important changes in affairs. He was supposed to be high in favor, and the style of his first letters indicates great confidence in himself. This confidence was not without foundation, as we have seen, although his capture had

shaken the opinions of some, and led others to canvass his merits more carefully than ever before. Some questioned the justice of Congress in their anxiety to protect and prefer him in the exchange of prisoners, while others censured him bitterly and insinuated that he was treacherous.

On the 9th of February, he wrote to Washington, inclosing a letter to Congress, which the Howes had permitted him to send. He says: "As Lord and General Howe have given me permission to send the enclosed to the Congress, and as the contents are of the last importance to me, and perhaps not less so to the community, I most earnestly entreat, my dear General, that you will despatch it immediately, and order the express to be as expeditious as possible." In the letter to Congress, which was inclosed, General Lee requested that they would permit two or three gentlemen to repair to New York, to whom he might communicate what deeply interested himself, and in his opinion the community. He says: "The most salutary effects may and I am convinced will result from it; and as Lord and General Howe will grant a safe conduct to the gentlemen deputed, it can possibly have no ill consequences." He expressed his wish that some of the gentlemen composing the Committee at Philadelphia might be nominated. Robert Morris, George Clymer, and George Walton, were the members of this Committee. Congress having adjourned from Philadelphia to Baltimore on the 12th of

December, 1776, assembled in the latter city on the 20th; and, on the next day, these gentlemen were appointed to execute such Continental business as might be proper and necessary to be done at Philadelphia. General Lee also wrote with very great earnestness to the Virginia Lees in Congress, and to Robert Morris and Benjamin Rush, soliciting their influence to accomplish his object. He gave no hint of the nature of the proposed communication, and it is obvious that none of his correspondents were acquainted with any of his ulterior purposes. Washington himself could see no possible evil that could result from granting General Lee's request; and as he thought some good might, wished with all his heart that Congress had gratified him. In this view of the case, Morris concurred, while Richard Henry Lee finally coincided with the majority in Congress, although his personal feelings towards General Lee were such, as to cause a great struggle in the determination. On the 21st of February, Congress directed General Washington to acquaint Lee that they judged it altogether improper to send any of their body to communicate with him, and that they could not perceive how a compliance with his request would tend to his advantage or the interest of the public. On the 26th of February, Lee was still impatiently expecting the gentlemen from Congress. He had urged the necessity of the greatest "possible expedition, as expedition in the present crisis of affairs

is of very material consequence;" and "to save time in the present situation of affairs is a matter of the most material consideration."

About the middle of March, Major Morris was permitted to visit General Lee, who availed himself of the opportunity, when Morris returned, to transmit to the President of Congress the following pressing letter, reiterating his former request. It is evident that he was not aware of the action Congress had already taken upon his application.

CHARLES LEE TO JOHN HANCOCK.

"New York, March y^e 19th, 1777.

"Sir:

"In the letter which sometime ago I did myself the honor of addressing to the Congress, altho' my own interests were deeply concerned, they were not simply so: I conceived those of America in general to be equally at stake. I am confident that had not some difficulties, which a man in my situation must be unacquainted with, prevented it, you would have comply'd with my request or favour'd me with the reasons of my disappointment. I most earnestly conjure you therefore, Sir, that as Lord and General Howe will grant 'em safe passports, two or three gentlemen may be deputed to converse with me on subjects of so great importance not only to myself but the community I so sincerely love—to prevent delay I have commissioned Mr. Morris to deliver this letter and flatter myself that I shall not be

thought indecently pressing, when I request that the gentlemen may without loss of time be deputed, or that the inexpediency of the measure may be signified to me by letter.

"I am, Sir, with the greatest respect,

"Your most obedient, humble servant,

"CHARLES LEE."

This letter was received in Philadelphia on the 28th, and read in Congress on the 29th March, whereupon after due consideration they adopted the following resolution:

"*Resolved*, That Congress still judge it improper to send any of their members to confer with General Lee, upon the subjects mentioned in his letter."

Those who are curious in dates will not fail to observe that this final action of Congress took place on the same day on which his treason was consummated. The reasons which prevailed in Congress against the measure were not fully known to him, but Robert Morris, in his letter of March 6th, 1777, to General Washington, hinted what he supposed to be "one of the most forcible arguments" used against it. He says: "I have not heard that it was used, but it occurred to me on reading General Lee's letters; I mean the effect it might have at the Court of France, should they hear, as they undoubtedly would, that members of Congress visited General Lee by permission of the British Commis-

sioners. The meeting with Lord Howe at Staten Island last summer injured Mr. Deane's negotiations much, and retarded supplies intended for us." Mr. Sparks states that he has seen a sketch of the debate of Congress on this subject, in which "the same argument was used to prove that the step was impolitic; and it was moreover said to be degrading, as Lord and General Howe could have no powers to treat of conciliation, except what they had derived from Parliament, which were known to extend only to receiving submissions and granting pardons. To send a committee to meet them under such circumstances, or to listen to their proposals through General Lee, was deemed inconsistent with the dignity of Congress."

The proposition was denounced in the patriot publications of the day, as one of the repeated, insidious, and delusive attempts of the enemies of America to seduce the people from their virtuous efforts, by holding out false ideas of peace and reconciliation. The same view was taken in a letter written by William Gordon, the historian, on the 3d of April, 1777. He says: ". . . . What has Lee been after of late? Suffering himself to be made a paw of by the Howes! If they have any proposals to make, fit for men of honor to offer, let them do it directly—they know how to send to the Congress."

A tory pamphlet published in 1780, referring to this affair, stated that "General Lee, while a

prisoner at New York, wrote two letters to intimate the willingness of Lord and General Howe to suspend the war, and enter upon a treaty for a permanent peace; he was then high in the confidence of the Congress, and requested to be appointed one of their Commissioners on this important service."

The correspondence which I have examined, indicates a general feeling among the officers of the army in favor of the application. The following extracts present the best cotemporary view of the whole subject, showing how sincere was the interest felt in Lee's personal welfare, and at the same time most conclusively, that no suspicion was entertained of his treachery.

GENERAL GREENE TO JOHN ADAMS.

"Baskinridge, March 3, 1777.

". . . I beg leave to make some enquiry into the policy of some late resolutions of Congress that respect General Lee. Why is he denied his request of having some persons appointed to confer with him? Can any injury arise? Will it reflect any dishonor upon your body to gratify the request of one of your Generals? Suppose any misfortune should attend him immediately, will not all his friends say, he was made a sacrifice of? That you had it in your power to save him, but refused your aid? He says in his letter, he has something of the last importance to propose with respect to himself, and adds, perhaps not less so to the public. You

cannot suppose that the General would hold out a proposition to bring us into disgrace or servitude? If he would, it is certainly our interest to know it seasonably, that we may not make a sacrifice for a man that is undeserving of it. If he would not, 'tis certainly a piece of justice due to his merit to give him a hearing. To hear what he has to propose cannot injure us, for we shall be at liberty to improve or reject his proposition.

"But let us consider it in another point of view. Will not our enemies, the disaffected, improve this report to our prejudice? They will naturally say that General Howe had a mind to offer some terms of peace, and that you refused to lend an ear or give him a hearing, and that you were obstinately bent on pursuing the war, evidently to the ruin of the people. Had you not consented to hear General and Lord Howe last spring, the public never would have been satisfied but there might have been an accommodation upon safe and honorable conditions. For my own part, I could wish you to give General Lee a hearing."

JOHN ADAMS TO GENERAL GREENE.

[Baltimore, March —, 1777.]

". . . You ask why General Lee is denied his request. You ask, Can any injury arise? Will it reflect any dishonor upon Congress? I do not know that it would reflect any dishonor, nor was it refused upon that principle. But Congress was of

opinion that great injuries would arise. It would take up too much time to recapitulate all the arguments which were used upon the occasion of his letter. But Congress was never more unanimous than upon that question. Nobody, I believe, would have objected against a conference concerning his private affairs, or his particular case. But it was inconceivable that a conference should be necessary upon such subjects. Any thing relative to these might have been conveyed by letter. But it appears to be an artful stratagem of the two grateful brothers to hold up to the public view the phantom of a negotiation, in order to give spirits and courage to the tories, to distract and divide the whigs at a critical moment, when the utmost exertions are necessary to draw together an army. They meant, further, to amuse opposition in England, and to amuse foreign nations by this manœuvre, as well as the whigs in America, and I confess it is not without indignation that I see such a man as Lee suffer himself to be duped by their policy, so far as to become the instrument of it, as Sullivan was upon a former occasion . . .

"But further. We see what use government and the two houses make of the former conference with Lord Howe. What a storm in England they are endeavoring to raise against us from that circumstance.

"But another thing. We have undoubted intelligence from Europe that the ambassadors and

other instruments of the British ministry at foreign courts made the worst use of the former conference. That conference did us a great and essential injury at the French court, you may depend upon it. Lord Howe knows it, and wishes to repeat it.

"Congress is under no concern about any use that the disaffected can make of this refusal. They would have made the worst use of a conference. As to any terms of peace, look into the speech to both Houses, the answers of both Houses. Look into the proclamations. It is needless to enumerate particulars which prove that the Howes have no power but to murder or disgrace us."

Washington had deferred the communication of the first resolution of Congress, doubtless expecting that they would alter their determination. He finally wrote to Lee from Morristown, on the 1st of April, announcing the result of his applications. The following letter is Lee's response to their refusal: written precisely one week after his Plan had been submitted to the Howes:

GENERAL LEE TO GENERAL WASHINGTON.

"New York, 5th April, 1777.

"My Dear Sir:

"It is a most unfortunate circumstance for myself, and I think not less so for the public, that the Congress have not thought proper to comply with my request. It could not possibly have been attended with any ill consequences, and might with

good ones. At least it was an indulgence, which I thought my situation entitled me to. But I am unfortunate in everything, and this stroke is the severest I have yet experienced. God send you a different fate. Adieu, my dear General.

"Yours most truly and affectionately,

"CHARLES LEE."

This letter needs little comment in this connection. It has been hitherto, the occasion of not a little sympathy for its author. Taken as an evidence of "the severe humiliation his haughty spirit had experienced" in his capture, this "brief sad note," as it has been characterized, in which "his pungent and caustic humor is at an end," has been contrasted with "the humorous, satirical, self-confident tone of his former letters." There is really no word for it but hypocrisy—I doubt if its parallel can be found in history.

The only subsequent allusion to this subject which I have met with in his correspondence, is in a letter to Robert Morris, dated at New York, on the 19th May, 1777, in which he says: "It would for several reasons have been highly improper, to have opened the business by letter, which, if I have the pleasure of seeing you, you will be convinced of."

What he expected to accomplish by his interview with the members of Congress is matter of conjecture—except as we may infer it from his co-

temporary scheme of treason, and the earnestness with which he urged his personal friends and members of the Committee at Philadelphia to visit him under the safe conduct of the Howes. It is hardly too much to suspect, in view of the base treachery of his Plan, that if any thing was to be accomplished by the most unworthy means and appliances, he, at any rate, would not shrink from the attempt. From the beginning of the contest, it was a principal object with the British emissaries (whether Generals or Commissioners, or both,) to weaken the power and counteract the views of the American leaders, by breaking and dividing the Congress among themselves. To complete their design, they were ready to invoke not only fire and sword, but intimidation, falsehood, and corruption!

This policy culminated in the grand Commission of 1778—which produced nothing but disappointment and chagrin in England, with an end to all negotiation. In the Parliamentary discussions which followed the intelligence of Burgoyne's defeat and capture and preceded the appointment of that commission, there is a significant passage which I will quote here, as it serves to show the character of Lee's communications to his relatives in England.

On the 4th December, 1777, Sir Charles Bunbury said that "he would not take upon him to say what America would do now; but he could assure the House from the authority of a dear, but unfortunate relation of his, the unhappy General Lee,

that the Americans would, at the beginning of the dispute, have been perfectly satisfied to submit in every respect to Great Britain, provided they should be at liberty to raise, by what means they thought proper, any sum which the Parliament of England should demand of them. He could not tell whether they would make such an offer now: but he would put them to the test, and by offering them peace, employ the only possible means to subdue them; and that was by dividing them . . . "

Here, I must for the present occasion, leave the subject. The Battle of Monmouth, Lee's trial, and his subsequent career, must be omitted. I will detain you but for a moment, at its close.

He died in Philadelphia, before the end of the war, at ten o'clock in the evening of Wednesday, the 2d of October, 1782, after an illness of five days. His last words, uttered in the delirium of fever, declared the wandering fancies of his mind to be with the army, and in the heady currents of the fight—"Stand by me, my brave grenadiers!" His remains were conducted, on Friday morning, with military honors, from the City-Tavern, attended by a large concourse of gentlemen of distinction, and deposited in Christ Church Yard.

Among those who paid their passing tribute of respect to his memory, there were doubtless not a few moved by a generous pity for the misfortunes, as they seemed, which enveloped his later years.

Their sympathy he had rejected while alive, and that could hardly follow him to his grave. But they forgot the wilful and wayward conduct, which had alienated all who were truly the friends of American Liberty; they remembered only the stirring tones of that patriotism, as they thought, which roused them to arms and urged them to independence. To them it might be as the same tale, and told as sternly, as any of the old familiar lessons of human disappointment. For, from that point of view, neither Troy, nor Carthage, nor any of the old ruined castles of Europe, nor the most tragic story, was ever more full of broken hopes and shattered schemes.

But this is changed. If the truth of history means any thing—

> "Only the actions of the just,
> Smell sweet, and blossom in the dust."

Tacitus has told us that "it is the chief part of the historian's duty to re-judge the conduct of men: that generous actions may be snatched from oblivion, and that the author of pernicious counsels, and the perpetrator of evil deeds, may see beforehand, the infamy that awaits them at the tribunal of posterity." So, too, to translate the language of him, who told the story of our Independence in the mother-tongue of Dante: "Make yourselves infamous by your deeds, and history shall make you infamous by her words!" There are, it is true,

human failures, which prudence or policy might conceal, which kindness and courtesy might modify; which "courage overshadows with his shield, which imagination covers with her wings, and charity dims with her tears." But Truth "forgives no insult and endures no stain;" and history demands moral sympathies of the highest and noblest kind. "Every truly great and original action has a prospective greatness, not alone from the power of the man who achieves it, but from the various aspects and high thoughts which the same action will continue to present and call up in the minds of others, to the end, it may be, of all time." So, too, with that which is bad—like the poetical vision of the Angel of Sin—it assumes vast proportions, and stands in the pathway of Time—

> "A monumental, melancholy gloom
> Seen down all ages."

It is impossible to avoid the constantly recurring contrast of Lee's career, with that of his great Chief. How we love to turn and linger in contemplation of the character of Washington, which we always recognize with a sense of affectionate admiration, not unmingled with an awe like that felt as in the presence of some great Spiritual Power. He who "in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness, in perils among false brethren," still bent all the force of his understanding, and direct-

ed all his thoughts and actions, to the good of his country. "In him were united the purity of the most disinterested patriotism, and all the energy of the most stirring ambition; the utmost reluctance to engage in the contest, with the firmest will never to abandon it when begun." Of him, it might be said with greater truth than it was said of the famous Spanish Cardinal: "He was like a city on the margin of deep waters, where no receding tide reveals any thing that is mean, squalid, or unbecoming." So

> "Let his great example stand
> Colossal, seen of every land,
> And keep the Soldier firm, the Statesman pure;
> Till in all lands, and through all human story,
> THE PATH OF DUTY BE THE WAY TO GLORY.'

New-York, June 22d, 1858.

It is proposed to publish

MEMOIRS OF THE LIFE AND TREASON OF CHARLES LEE, Major General, second in command in the American Army of the Revolution, together with his Political and Military Writings and Correspondence with many Distinguished Characters, both in Europe and America. Edited by GEORGE H. MOORE, Librarian of the New-York Historical Society.

The work will comprise all the materials in Langworthy's Memoirs, of which two editions have been published in England and three in America, and the entire proceedings of the Court Martial on Lee, in 1778, all which are long since out of print and now rare, besides numerous original letters and documents, never before collected or published. It will be illustrated with several engravings on steel, maps, and plans, together with fac-similes of some of the most important documents.

[Fac-Simile No. 1 p. 68.]

Basking Ridge Dec'r 9th 17th 1776

My Dr Gates

The dangerous situation of Genl Washington has unhinged the goodly fabrick we had been building — there was no Dernd a Stroke — entre nous a certain great Man is most damnably deficient — He has thrown me into a situation where I have my choice of difficulties — if I stay in this Province I risk myself and all my army and if I do not stay the Province is lost for ever — I have neither guards Cavalry Medicines Money Shoes or Stockings — I must act with the greatest circumspection Tories are in my front rear and on my flanks — the Mass of the People is strangely contaminated — in short unless something which I do not expect turns up I fear lest our Cause should be ruined — as to what relates to yourself if you think you can be in time to aid the General I would have you by all means go You with at least take your army — it is said that the Whigs are determined to set fire to Philadelphia if they find this design Work the day will be our own — but unless it is done all chance of Liberty in any part of the Globe is for ever banished — Adieu, My Dr Gates — God bless you

Charles Lee

As on the one hand it appears to me that by the continuance of the War America has no chance of obtaining the ends She proposes to herself; that although by struggling She may put the Mother Country to very serious expence both in blood and Money, yet She must in the end, after great desolation havock and slaughter be reduced to submit to terms much harder than might probably be granted at present and as on the other hand Great Britain tho ultimately victorious, must suffer very heavily even in the process of her victories every life lost and every guinea spent being in fact worse than thrown away: it is only wasting her own property, shedding her own blood and destroying her own strength, and as I am not only persuaded from the high opinion I have of the humanity and good sense of Lord and General Howe that the terms of accommodation will be as moderate as their powers will admit, but that their powers are more ample than their successors (should any accident happen) would be vested with, I think myself not only justifiable but bound in conscience to furnish all the lights I can, to enable em to bring matters to a conclusion in the most compendious manner and consequently the least expensive to both Parties — I do this with the more readiness as I know the most generous use will be made of it in all respects — their humanity will incline em to

has consideration for Individuals who have acted from Principle and their good sense will tell on that the more moderate are the general conditions; the more solid and permanent will be the union - for if the conditions were extremely repugnant to the general way of thinking, it would be only the mere patchwork of a day which the first breath of wind will dissipate and the first symptoms of a rupture between the Bourbon Powers and Great Britain absolutely ensue - but I really have no apprehensions of this kind whilst Lord and General Howe have the direction of affairs, and flatter myself that under their auspices, an accommodation may be built on so solid a foundation as not to be shaken by any such incidents - In this persuasion and on these principles I shall most sincerely and zealously contribute all in my power to so desirable an end, and if no untoward accidents, fall out which no human foresight can guard against I will answer with my life for the success -

From my present situation and ignorance of certain facts, I am sensible that I hazard proposing things which cannot without difficulties be complyd with, I can only act from surmise therefore hope allowances will be made for my circumstances - I will suppose then that (exclusive of the troops requisite for the security of Rhode Island and N York) General Howe's Army (comprehending every species, British, Hessians and Provincials) amounts to twenty thousand Men capable to take the

the field and act offensively; by which I mean to move to any part of the Continent where occasion requires. I will suppose that the General's Design with this force is to clear the Jerseys and take possession of Philadelphia but in my opinion the taking possession of Philadelphia will not have any decisive consequences. the Congress and People adhering to the Congress have already made up their minds for the worst; already they have turn'd their eyes to other places where they can fix their seat of residence carry on in some measure their Government; or those expecting this event they have devised measures for protracting the War in hopes of some favourable turn of affairs in Europe. the taking possession therefore of Philadelphia or any one or two Towns more which the General may have in view, will not be decisive — to bring matters to a conclusion it is necessary to subjugate or dispose if I may so express myself the whole System or Machinery of resistance, or in other terms, Congress Government this System or Machine, as affairs now stand, depends entirely on the circumstances and disposition of the People of Maryland Virginia and Pensylvania. if the Province of Maryland or the greater part of it is reduced or submits, and the People of Virginia are prevented or intimidated from marching aid to the Pensylvania Army the whole machine is dissolved and a period put to the War

to accomplish which, is, the object of the scheme which I now take the liberty of offering to the consideration of his Lordship and the General, and if it is adopted in full I am so confident of its success that I would stake my life on the issue — I have at the same time the comfort to reflect, that in pursuing our measures which I know to be the most effectual I point out those which will be attended with no bloodshed or desolation to the Colonies — As the difficulty of passing and repassing the North River and the apprehensions from General Carltons Army will I am confident keep the New Englanders at home, or at least confine 'em to the East side the River; and as their Provinces are at present neither the seat of Government strength nor Politicks I cannot see that any offensive operations against these Provinces would answer any sort of Purpose to secure N. York and Rhode Island against their attacks will be sufficient — on the supposition then, that General Howe's Army including every species of Troops, amounts to twenty or twenty eight thousand Men at liberty to move to any part of the Continent; as fourteen thousand will be more than sufficient to clear the Jerseys and take possession of Philadelphia, I would propose that four thousand Men be immediately embarked in transports

one half of which should proceed up the Potomac and take post at Alexandria, the other half up Chesapeak Bay and possess themselves of Annapolis They will most probably meet with no opposition in taking possession of these Posts, and when possessed they are so very strong by nature that a few hours work and some trifling artillery will secure them against the attacks of a much greater force than can possibly be brought down against them their communication with the shipping will be constant and sure for at Alexandria Vessels of a very considerable burthen (of five or six hundred Tons for instance) can lie in close to the Shore, and at Annapolis within musket shot - all the necessaries and refreshments for an Army are near at hand, and in the greatest abundance Kent Island will supply that of Annapolis and every part on both banks of the Potomac that of Alexandria These Posts may with ease support each other, as it is but two easy days march from one to the other, and if occasion requires by a single days March They may join at and conjointly carry on their operations where ever it should be thought eligible to direct them whether to take possession of Baltimore or post themselves upon some spot on the Westward bank of the Susquehanna which is a point of the

at most importance — but here I must beg leave to observe that there is a measure which if the General approves & and adopts will be attended with momentous and the most happy consequences — I mean that from these Posts proclamations of pardon should be issued to all those who come in at a given day, and I will answer for it with my life that all the Inhabitants of that great tract Southward of the Potomac and lying betwixt the Potomac and Chesapeak Bay and those on the eastern Shore of Maryland will immediately lay down their arms — but this is not all, I am much mistaken if those potent and populous German Districts, to wit those County in Maryland and York in Pensylvania do not follow their example — These Germans are extremely numerous, and to a man have hitherto been the most staunch Asserters of the American cause; but at the same time are so remarkably tenacious of their property and apprehensive of the least injury being done to their fine farms that I have no doubt when they see a probability of their Country becoming the seat of War they will give up all opposition but if contrary to my expectations a force should be

assembled at Alexandria sufficient to prevent the Troops detached thither from taking possession immediately of the places, it will make no disadvantageous alteration, but rather the reverse — a variety of spots near Alexandria upon either bank of the Potomac may be chosen for Posts equally well calculated for all the the great purposes I have mentioned — viz for the reduction or compulsion to submission of the whole Province of Maryland for the preventing or intimidating Virginia from sending aids to Pensylvania for in fact if any force is assembled at Alexandria sufficient to oppose the Troops sent against it, getting possession of it, it must be at the expence of the more Northern Army, as they must be composed of those Troops which were otherwise destined for Pensylvania to say all in a word, it will unhinge and dissolve the whole system of defence and I am so confident of the event that I will venture to assert ~~at the risk~~ with the penalty of my life if the plan is fully adopted, and no accidents (such as a reprisal between the Powers of Europe) ~~do~~ intervene, that in less than two months from the date of the

proclamation not a spark of this desolating war remains wherever unquenched in any part of the Continent

Pr. Lewis Plan
29th March 1777.

A

On the Road from Annapolis to Queen Anns there is one considerable River to be pass'd, but as the Ships boats can easily be brought round from the Bay to the usual place of passage or Ferry, this is no impediment if the Two Corps chuse to unite they may by a single days march either at Queen Anns or Marlborough

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